

PARSIFAL

THE HOLY
GRAIL

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Message of the Mystics

Message of the Mystics

MARY HANFORD FORD.

*O, what are heroes, prophets, men,
But pipes through which the breath of Pan doth blow!*

The Holy Grail

Goethe's Faust

Balzac's Seraphita

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On the platform, Mrs. Ford is a master at interpreting the above authors; no doubt the reading public will appreciate the service she has rendered in revealing the symbolism of these mystical books, so profound and yet prophetic.

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KUNDRY'S BAPTISM.

Finney Huntington

THE HOLY GRAIL

The Silent Teacher

BY

MARY HANFORD FORD

Author of "Which Wins," and "Otto's Inspiration."

Highest Love who shines on all,
Him, radiant, sharpest sighted God,
None can bewilder.—*Emerson.*

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THE HOLY GRAIL.

The story of the Holy Grail has been told and sung for so many years that its origin is shrouded in impenetrable mystery. As long ago as the eighth century, wandering minstrels chanted the tale in the dark halls of feudal chieftains. The Troubadour, a little later, sang of the miracle in the boudoir of his lady, for whom he composed his rarest sirvente, and his most thrilling canzone. The fasting monk dreamed of the chalice which the angels might offer to the lips of a devotee, while the thinker, wrapped in meditation, felt the radiance of the Grail, and believed that the truth he had conceived was approved in Heaven.

In the beginning the story seems to have been a simple one. It told how Joseph of Arimathea was given permission to take down the body of Christ from the cross. He went first to the

chamber where the communion supper had been held, and secured the silver cup out of which Christ had drunk with his disciples. He took it with him to the sorrowful scene of the crucifixion, and there, when a brutal soldier had pierced the Savior's side with his spear, he reverently caught in the cup the blood that flowed from the wound of Him who died for love. From that moment the chalice became sacred; and it was afterward the chief treasure of Joseph. When he was poor and in prison, it comforted him. His jailer left him to starve; but his cell was filled with the sweet savor of the food that was brought to him through the power of the cup. While he ate, the angels sang to him; and Christ sat by his side and talked with his old friend. It was not strange that with such companionship and refreshment, years should seem like days, and Joseph of Arimathea did not realize that he had been many twelve-months in a prison cell. After he was liberated he baptized Vespasian, the old legend says; and was commanded to preach

the gospel to the heathen. "I am not a clerk," he responded, hesitatingly, "and how can I preach?"

"Open your mouth," replied Christ, "and the Holy Ghost will form your words."

There are many varying legends of Joseph's adventures after he began to preach. He converted King Evalak, of the city of Sarras, and aided him to conquer his enemies. Evalak's name was changed to Mordrains when he was baptized, and some versions of the narrative tell us how he was seized with a terrible illness of which he was to be miraculously healed by the best knight of the world. He hung his white shield, marked with a red cross, over the tomb of Duke Naciens, knowing that it should be borne by the knight Galahad, because only he could restore Mordrains to health. Galahad's name is not mentioned in the primitive story, but after he appears his prominence gradually increases, until he becomes the chief figure of the adventure in one group of the poems. Galahad was miraculously born, in the old legend, as

well as in its latest versions. Joseph himself is sometimes represented as his father, and Galahad as the founder of the English race. He is always the champion of Christianity, and the guardian of the Grail. The glory of his prowess, however, is not dilated upon by the earlier minstrels. The romantic incidents of the Round Table and Arthur's court, which we associate so intimately with the legend of the Grail today, were combined with the story later in its evolution; and the simplicity and naiveté of its narration form the principal charm of the earlier version.

In the ministry of Joseph the conversion of England occupies a large place. He founded the abbey of Glastonbury, where the nightingale sang, and the hawthorn bloomed at Christmastide. Wherever he went, blessing and prosperity followed him. The sick were healed; the poor fed; the blind saw; the lame walked; and all the land blossomed into eternal freshness, under the inspiring fragrance of the Grail. When Joseph died he left a new

world behind him, and a well-spring of happiness for mankind in the sacred power of the holy chalice.

In the tale of Joseph of Arimathea we perceive that already there was more than the story of a cup in the conception of the strolling singer who first gave it voice. The cup symbolized salvation, and the poem was an allegory which varied as time and place necessitated change; but which told, nevertheless, in its own fashion, how God touches the heart of each one and brings it heavenly joy. The cup is the knowledge of God's grace, and the refreshment, the food, the sustaining force always associated with it are the visible exponents of God's power.

In the twelfth century the poem found a new development, and took on more of that grace, form and symbolism which we now connect with it. Two elements contributed materially to this result. The twelfth century was especially the period of the crusades, and of an awakening of thought and literary activity, which the

world had not known before, and which remained unprecedented until the wonderful years of the Renaissance revival. The enthusiasm over the crusades naturally heightened the effect upon the imagination of everything connected with the death of Christ, and the story of the cup found fresh charms in the hands of its gifted narrators.

In France, and especially in Provence, Percival was the favorite hero of the Grail poets. They associated him with the healing of the wounded king and the recovery of the Grail; but it remained for Wolfram von Eschenbach to weld the many varying elements of differing versions together into the charming legend of Mont Salvat and Parsifal.* The sacred mount-

*The knight Percival appears in many different poems and masquerades under various disguises of spelling. He is Perchevaus and Perceval in the French poems; Percival and Percivale in the English versions; Peredur in the Welsh forms of the story; Parzival in the great epic of Wolfram von Eschenbach; and Parsifal in the drama of Wagner. The last has been most frequently used in the present volume, as the opera of Wagner has made it more familiar.

ain was situated in southern Spain, and upon its summit was the mysterious castle where the Grail was preserved, guarded by chosen knights. For years the King of the Grail had cherished the treasure entrusted to his care, living in purity and love; but at last Amfortas, the son of Titurel, had been false to his trust. He had crossed the threshold of Klingschor's palace, and, under the spell of the great magician, he had sinned. Klingschor pursued him as he endeavored to escape, and wounded him with the sacred spear, which had once touched the side of the Savior upon the cross. From that moment Amfortas was cursed and unable to die; he must drag out his weary life, until a knight should come to the Grail castle so pure that he could not sin, so tender and full of pity that he could not refrain from asking the cause of the king's suffering. Parsifal is the hero destined to save the King; and, until he arrives, no remedy is of any avail.

The story of Mont Salvat is interesting in many ways. It breathes the spirit of the cru-

sades; and was, perhaps, suggested by the organization of the Knights of the Temple, if it did not inspire the latter, which formed one of the most valorous and powerful aids to the Christian onslaught against the Saracens. In the hands of the old poets, however, it becomes a beautiful symbol of Christian life and mystical self sacrifice.

Mont Salvat is guarded by knights who have given up the world and its fascinations, and yet who are not entirely set apart from it. They are still devoted to it through the ties of brotherly love. Though they live at Mont Salvat, they are ready to return to the bustle of everyday life and encounter, whenever they are needed. If a champion is called for the defense of weakness and misfortune, and especially if the prowess demanded is beyond the power of the warrior of mere ordinary caliber, the knight of the Grail goes forth, as did Lohengrin gliding onward in his swan boat, at the call of Elsa.

The knight of the Grail wins the victory of truth and right by the strength of the Divine

that is within him. Meanwhile, though he does not marry while at the holy castle, marriage is not prohibited, and if he wins the cause of a fair lady who needs his protection, he may become her husband, and demonstrate in the tumult of life the nobility of his soul and the vigor of his arm. There is but one restriction upon his betrothal. The bride who receives him must ask no question as to his origin. She must have faith in his knightly lineage and accept him for the sake of the high qualities he reveals. If she violates her promise and can not trust him, he must return to Mont Salvat, and she receives the just punishment of her unbelief.

The knights who form the battalion of King Titurel and Amfortas, are not, however, the only inhabitants of the castle of the Grail. In the beautiful ceremonial where the sacred mystery is carried in procession before the King, the Grail bearers are women; and the ladies who dwell at the castle, as well as the knights, are devoted to chaste and lofty service. Like them, also, they are not set apart from the

world, for whenever service is demanded they are ready. They go forth from the sacred castle to be the mothers of heroes, and the wives of men whose need is for a helpmeet capable of great sacrifice, and endowed with unusual wisdom. In the castle of the Grail lessons are learned which cannot be taught elsewhere; and their application is always to the affairs of this world whenever the emergency is pressing and the situation unusual.

The twelfth century familiarizes us with two great groups of Grail stories and poems, the one clustering about the figure of Galahad, and the other connected with the knighthood of Percival. As to who wrote the first poem of either cycle, it is impossible to say; but those which seem to have had most influence upon the world are the great poem of Kyot, written probably in Provençal, and celebrating the prowess of Percival or Parsifal; and the poems of Walter Map, which are devoted to the panegyric of Galahad, entitled the *Grand Saint Grail* and the *Quest*. These two

were written in Latin, and the originals are long since lost; but they have been preserved in early French translations; and have proved the source of the Galahad stories with which we are most familiar. Sir Thomas Mallory translated the *Quest* into English prose in the fifteenth century; and this forms the foundation of Tennyson's *Idyls of the King*, which have popularized, more successfully than anything else, the legends and traditions connected with Sir Galahad.

Critics are still discussing the possible origin of the Grail stories, and the point as to whether Galahad or Percival was the original hero.

It is possible that inspiration for both cycles of poems may have been found in Provence. In the twelfth century this portion of the world was significant as being the home of the Albigensian heresy, the most important revolt against the authority of the church before the Reformation of three hundred years later. The Albigenses were Christian mystics who were shocked at the enormous luxury and pride

in the church of that day, and sought the truth for themselves in the New Testament, and the writings of the early Christian fathers. They preached against priestly absolution and the abuse of spiritual power among the great churchmen; and they demanded a purity of life and asceticism in their followers' lives which was not frequent in the Christianity of their period. They were also influenced by the prevalent Manichæism of that era, which reflected the ancient Persian dualism of light and darkness, good and evil, and taught a spiritual chastity more practical in its application than that usually prescribed by the church. The persecution of the Albigenses was more bitter than any that preceded the Reformation; though the sect was completely stamped out by the power of the one great Catholic church of the period, it left its impress upon the thought of the age as it is preserved in literature. Many of the songs of the troubadours were tinged with its influence. The *Percival* of Chrestiens de Troyes reflects its gen-

the mysticism; the *Parsifal* of Wolfram von Eschenbach preserves its teachings in a more robust and elaborate form; and the *Divine Comedy* of Dante, as well as much of the philosophy of Petrarch, is strongly colored by its pervading tendency.

Wolfram von Eschenbach wrote in the early part of the thirteenth century, and claims to owe much of the inspiration of his *Parsifal* to a poem by Kyot, which he declares was also used by Chrestiens de Troyes in his *Percival*; and was of Provençal origin. The poem of Wolfram is more deeply religious than that of Chrestiens; as Wolfram blames the French poet for not having treated their Provençal original with sufficient reverence, one is led to the conclusion that Kyot must have been one of the exponents of the mystical fervor of the day.

Walter Map, who wrote the *Quest*, the *Grand Saint Grail*, and perhaps also, as some writers claim, the poem of *Launcelot*, was a churchman and warrior, a man of brilliant attainments,

and a favorite at the court of Henry the Second of England. We do not know when or how he wrote his romantic poems; but we are told that he was sent as an ambassador to the court of Raymond, of Thoulouse, the center of Provençal culture, and was appointed an arbitrator in one of the many quarrels of the church with the Waldensian heretics. At the court of Raymond, the English poet may have met Kyot. He undoubtedly heard his poem and came in contact with that peculiar and mystical faith which had roused so many minds to activity and which had much to do with the inspiration of the poems of Percival. It would not have been singular if Walter Map, impressed by the sincerity and fervor in the faith of those he met, went back to England determined to write a Grail poem which should preserve much of the beautiful symbolism of the poems he had heard, and at the same time be free from the infecting heterodoxy which menaced the peace of the church he loved.

Such a supposition would account definitely

for the curious doctrinal difference which we discover between the poems of which Galahad is the central figure, and those in which the interest gathers about Percival or Parsifal. In both, the Grail is the symbol of spiritual hope and salvation for all mankind. In the Percival poems it is the revelation of God's grace to the heart, bringing new life and power to the soul. It comes without the intervention of any outward aid. No priest, no church, no rite is necessary for its fulfillment. The growth of the soul lifts the individual to a plane where the oneness of all in creation is realized, God is known, and the consciousness of separation from Him disappears.

In the Galahad poems the Grail symbolizes salvation also, and bespeaks the mystery of the union of the soul with God. This grace is brought to the individual through the church, however, and the Grail figures thus particularly the sacrament of communion, the outer and inner union between the soul and God. The mystery of the sharing of the body and blood

of Christ is plainly pictured, and in all cases where the Grail is discovered, it is attended by the stately accompanying ceremonies of the mass in the holy Catholic Church. Its lofty and beautiful symbolism, as representative of the salvation which the soul seeks eagerly, is by no means lost sight of. It is always mingled and accompanied, however, with the function and power of Holy Church as the intermediary between God and man. There is a theological element in the Walter Map poems, therefore, which is quite important in its effect upon their poetic value. Galahad is a romantic and beautiful figure born to accomplish certain ends. He is set apart from other men; invulnerable as far as temptation is concerned; never influenced by the love of woman; an ascetic and priestly hero; noble and picturesque; but with little of the human in his make-up. He is never suffering and never unsuccessful. He accomplishes his ends invariably because he is destined to do so, and not on account of the special prowess of his right arm. The religious

feeling of the poems is, also, rather of the outward sort. It is reverence for the power and offices of Holy Church that inspires the devotee, and not the growth of enlightening aspiration in the heart. The religion is more theological than mystical, and the reverence is for ritual and observance, not for the truth which reveals itself to the spirit.

In all of these later poems, the story of the Round Table and its Knights is connected with the achievement of the Grail, and a widely varied series of adventures with which the principal heroes of Arthur's court are concerned, prolong and heighten the interest and dramatic power of the central movement and event. In both groups the healing of the wounded King is recounted, but in Galahad's history the meeting with the King is scarcely more than an incident of the knight's career; while in that of Percival, it is the central point about which his life turns and develops.

In the story of Percival, the name and character of Galahad are not known or mentioned;

but in the poems of Galahad the knightly form of Percival is the constant attendant of Galahad; and when the chosen hero achieves the Grail, Percival and Bors kneel beside him and share his joy as they have taken part in his dangers and sympathized in his sorrows.

In many respects the two groups of poems contain the same elements; but there is in each, nevertheless, a tradition seeming on the one side Provençal or Arabic, on the other having its origin in Wales or Brittany. In the Galahad poems the Grail castle and its surrounding incidents are in Wales, and yet the city of Sarras is evidently in a Saracen land. There are two wounded Kings, Pelles and Mordrains, and though the latter dwells in the Welsh castle of Carbonek, his story seems a memory of the healing of King Amfortas.

In the poem of Chrestiens de Troyes, the incidents are those of the saving of Amfortas, but the King is not named, and the localities are Welsh, while in Wolfram's Parsifal we discover the Spanish and Provençal

localities and nomenclature, and the lineage of Titurel and Amfortas, his son, has no connection with Joseph of Arimathea. The deduction one makes is naturally that there were many poems sung by widely separated singers, and that each great poet selected what he chose from the minstrelsy with which he was familiar. There is a priority of certain materials, however, and the student finds many reasons for believing that the simple early poem of Joseph of Arimathea was one of the first songs of the Grail, and that the Percival myth was popular before Galahad was known.

In speaking of Galahad as a Grail hero, it is always well to remember that Tennyson in his *Idyls of the King* has used the older literature as his fancy dictated, and has selected and altered at will in order to suggest the ideas which he wishes to present. Tennyson had little sympathy with the mysticism of the older writers, which he frequently does not take the trouble to understand, and replaces by something which is merely picturesque and pretty. Wal-

ter Map had his own ideas as to the consecration of soul and aim; and he put them vigorously into his poems. He makes no attempt to veil the symbolism of his figures, and often seems to take delight in rendering it as clear as possible. Thus the whole story of Arthur's Round Table is frankly an allegory.

When Merlin fashioned the Round Table, says the story, he called it the world, and Arthur determined that it should be a flawless world. He selected the knights who were to form his band, therefore, convinced that with purity and noble impulse, with stout hearts and strong hands, he could make his little universe a perfect one. The ideal of chivalry should be its ruling principle, and an honorable knighthood could bring Heaven upon earth. The old poet of the *Quest* believed, however, that man is so constituted as to need something more than human reason to teach him righteousness. It is the mission of the church to bring salvation to mankind, says the Grail poet, and if he refuses this higher spiritual teaching he is lost.

Thus Arthur sees his best knights leave him in the search for the Grail. They do not all find it. Such treasure is not within the means of everyone; but each can strive for it even if he sacrifices all his honors and pleasures in its quest. In carrying out the allegory, therefore, which teaches us the difference between spiritual and worldly ideals, the old poet shows us Arthur dying alone, defeated in battle and betrayed by his wife and his best friend. In his dying moments he begged Sir Bevidere to carry him to the lake shore, and throw the sword *Excalibur* into the water. Three times Sir Bevidere took the weapon, and endeavored to fulfill the wish of his dying master. It was his last request, and he was the only servitor left his King.

Again and again, as he turned away, the eyes of the knight were fascinated by the glitter of the jewels in the hilt, and the chasings of the wonderful shining blade. Throw away such a sword as that! What nonsense! Arthur will never know what has been done

with it! He is dying and his eyes can never flash upon the treachery of his faithless servant. So Sir Bevidere hid the sword and returned with lying words to the dying King. Arthur knew well what would happen, however, if the sword were once consigned to the waves, and his reproaches heaped upon the head of the false knight roused his conscience, so that at last, covering his eyes from the glint of the tantalizing jewels, Sir Bevidere lifted his strong right arm and threw the weapon far across the expanse of limpid water. Then, greatly to his surprise, a white arm rose from the center of the lake and receiving the sword as it fell, carried it within the dark recesses beneath the surface of the water. When Sir Bevidere returned this time Arthur knew that he spoke the truth. He waited patiently through the falling shadows, until the black barge in which the three queens were seated, floated to the shore. Then he was lifted tenderly and they bore him away to Avillon, where he should be healed one day,

and return to reign over a fairer realm with purer ideals and truer friendships.

The passing of Arthur is full of poetry entirely aside from its allegorical significance; and one feels that the Christian poet has preserved in it the closing of an earlier idyl, which treated Arthur as a sun hero, stepping out of that myth-land which has brought us so many champions. The end fitted well the symbolic purpose of the poet. The sword Excalibur, which was put into the hands of Prince Arthur by the Lady of the Lake, and returned to her at last, symbolizes that chivalry, by the aid of which Arthur hoped to make his world perfect. How can chivalry help him in that mysterious land toward which he journeyed in the black barge? It had been but a weak support at best in his struggle with fate, and it was fitting, therefore, that in the passing hour he should resign it to the heathen hands which bestowed it upon him. The hesitating of Sir Bevidere, the struggle which goes on in his mind before he can resolve to throw away the glittering bauble,

is but a symbol of the wavering human intelligence which doubts and hesitates ever, before it can decide that the support of the church and the strength of the spirit are more vital, and far more satisfying, than the outward bulwark of knightly achievement, no matter how brilliant that may seem.

The contrast between Galahad and the more worldly knighthood of Arthur and his chosen followers is always dramatic and significant, though occasionally it may leave the reader somewhat lacking in enthusiasm for Galahad himself. There are many charming touches in the old story of Walter Map, however, which show how fully the mind of the author was open to the beauty and profound significance of much which he clothes in a somewhat conventional and sacerdotal mask.

Galahad was destined to bring back the Grail to the world; and so, like all heroes, he must be born of parents who are worthy of such high honor. The romance of Launcelot and Elaine reveals the mystery of the birth of Galahad,

and the charm of the recital has quite disappeared from Tennyson's version of the episode. The love of Elaine for Launcelot was not the wandering fancy of an innocent girl. She was born to be the mother of a great son, and we read in the *Quest* the true explanation of her fascination. One day, after Launcelot had fought long and conquered a dragon, he was met by King Pelles, who invited him to his castle. There Launcelot saw strange things. As he and the King sat together, a white dove flew into the chamber bearing a golden censer in its beak, from which the sweetest odors permeated the apartment. Presently a door opened and four maidens entered; also a fair girl, bearing a golden chalice, in the presence of which the King kneeled and offered his devotions. Immediately each guest found before him the meat of which he was most fond, and the wine he loved best, while the air was filled with a delicious spicy fragrance. Launcelot wondered, and King Pelles explained to him that this was the Holy Grail, which

the world had lost, but which would be recovered because all the knights of Arthur's court must go in search of it, and the chosen knight of the circle would be successful in its quest.

King Pelles was wise, for he was the cousin of Joseph of Arimathea, and had passed his life in the midst of the beautiful influences of the Holy Grail. He knew, therefore, that his daughter Elaine must be the mother of this great knight who should win the Grail, and that Launcelot must be his father. Everyone knew how Launcelot loved Guinevere, and how true he was to this sinful infatuation; so he could not marry Elaine. By enchantment, therefore, it was brought about that Launcelot became the father of the wonderful infant, that the law might be fulfilled and the good accomplished.

When Galahad came to the court all knew that he was the knight destined for great things. He entered the hall at Camelot, and sat in the *siege perilous*. There were golden letters written about it, which said that if he were not pure, who sat therein, he must die. So all present

looked to see Galahad give up the ghost, but he did not. He had no sword, and they took him to a place where a stone floated on the face of the water, holding a sword. Many good knights had endeavored to draw it forth and failed, because no one of them was the greatest knight in the world. Galahad put his hand to the sword and drew it forth easily.

He had a beautiful horse but no shield, and he rode to a church where a wonderful white shield was hung with a red cross upon it. Many knights had essayed to carry it, but it was said that if the knight who was not perfect bore it on his arm, much sorrow would befall him. King Bogdemagus wore it, and met a knight in white armor who struck him down, but when Galahad slipped his arm through the band and met the white knight, he only heard the story of how the shield had been left there for him, and came to no harm at all.

Galahad wrought many mighty deeds, always with the same ease, with the same freedom from temptation; so at last, when his labors

were accomplished, he came to the castle of Carbonek, in the country of Logris, and there after he had healed the King and been fed from the Grail, he was commanded to take the sacred cup to the country of Sarras, because Logris was no longer worthy of its preservation.

When Galahad saw the Grail, Joseph of Arimathea descended from Heaven and officiated at the service of the mass in which the Grail was presented to him. To render the symbolism of the sacrament still more plain, the poet pictures how as the Holy Bishop broke the bread and lifted the cup, a figure descended from Heaven in the form of a manikin and was dissolved in the sacred vessel. After the service was over and Galahad's lips had been touched by this precious refreshment, the Savior himself stepped from the cup and spoke to him and commended him.

When Galahad was imprisoned with his two friends in the city of Sarras, the holy vessel was with them in their confinement, and comforted and upheld them. After awhile the

city was conquered and Galahad was made King. He wore his crown for a year, and then he felt that his mission was accomplished. After the first wonderful revelation, Galahad prayed aloud one day in the presence of Percival, and besought that God would bestow such grace upon him that whenever he asked for death, it might be granted to him. Percival was astonished, and inquired of Galahad why he craved such a boon as that. "I will tell you," replied Galahad. "Yesterday in the Grail service I felt such a joy as I never knew before, and I am sure that this joy is what the angels of Heaven experience every moment, so I long to be among them, and I have prayed that God will grant me death whenever I ask for it."

When the moment came in which Galahad felt that he had a right to crave the boon he had desired so long, the Grail was brought forth from its cherished resting place, the mass was celebrated and Joseph of Arimathea descended from Heaven as before, and touched the lips of Galahad with the sacred cup. Then Galahad

said, "Now, blessed Lord, grant my prayer if it please thee; for I would no longer live."

He went to Sir Percival and kissed him upon the mouth. He went to Sir Bors and kissed him also. He sent messages to his father, Sir Launcelot, and then kneeled down before the table of the Grail and commended his soul to God. A great multitude of angels descended out of Heaven as he prayed, and bore him with them to the home he had longed to enter, and a hand came from the clouds, seized the spear and the Holy Grail and bore both to Heaven.

The death of Galahad is very different from that of Arthur, but the hand from Heaven which receives the Grail, has perhaps been suggested by the hand from the lake which rescued the sword. The latter was resigned because it had no place in the mysterious land to which Arthur journeyed; but the Grail is taken to Heaven on the assumption that it is too sacred for earth. The piety of man must unveil the knowledge of God in the soul, but this knowledge is too precious to be left unpro-

tected, and so Heaven takes it in charge, and the church becomes the careful guardian of that cherished possession which lifts the human being out of materialism, and into the spiritual life, that leads to a perfected existence.

The death of Galahad leaves us a little out of sympathy with the ancient poet who has told his story with such simplicity and feeling. The Grail should be among men and not in Heaven if it is to be useful to the world. Its mysteries cannot be too publicly celebrated. It would be better if our Galahads dwelt among us with their Grails, and taught us to hear the angel choruses which resound while the beautiful service is performed. Then we should understand the value of the quest, and the reason why so many brave knights have followed it.

If the old poets dilate too fully on the perfections of Galahad, and leave us convinced that he won his honors easily and does not deserve our tears for his hardships, we experience no such feelings when we read of the struggles and trials of Sir Bors and Sir Launce-

lot. In both these knights the poet has traced for us much the same search for perfection as is portrayed by Wolfram von Eschenbach in the sorrows and triumph of Parsifal.

Sir Bors always just failed in achieving the Grail. He lay at the bottom of a stone tower, and heard the chanting of the service, perceived the marvelous fragrance of its Divine presence. In the castle of King Pellès he entered the perilous chamber, conquered all the adversaries who came against him, fought the lion and the leopard, and remained unterrified when the air was suddenly filled with arrows shot through the windows. At last, when all was over, an old man entered, seated himself before the weary knight, took his harp and sang the beautiful story of how Joseph of Arimathea found the Grail, and brought peace and love to England through its means. As he sang, the weariness of the knight departed, joy entered his heart, and he knew the meaning of love.

While he listened to the gentle words of the minstrel, a white dove entered the window,

bearing a golden censer in its beak, and the fragrance which came from it filled the apartment with spicy and delicious odors. Wisdom entered the soul of the knight, and wherever he might wander in the world thereafter, sin did not tempt him as formerly, and pleasure bore a different aspect. Truth had risen within him, and her light could not be extinguished.

The struggles and disappointments of Launcelot were even more touching than those of Sir Bors, for the latter at least attained to the companionship of Galahad, and the honor of admission to the Grail ceremonies. In Launcelot, however, we see painted the struggle with sin which had no place in Galahad's experience, because he was born so pure that failure was impossible to him. Launcelot would not give up his love for Guinevere, and so he learned of the existence of the Grail, and sought it in vain for years before he was able to combat successfully that weakness within himself which seems the heritage of all mortals.

Meanwhile he was never left without warn-

ing of his sin, and of the bliss which might be his could he only turn from it and seek the light. There is no one so deep in the mire of indulgence that he cannot hear the warning voice which tells him of firmer ground to walk upon, and the vision appeared to Launcelot, as to all erring souls.

One night he came to a castle and laid himself down before the door of a chapel which he could not open. Presently, however, he found the door unclosed, and saw maidens within carrying a beautiful silver vessel, and as they walked chanting wonderful harmonies. The knight had never heard such music. The air was filled with lights and with delicious fragrance. Intoxicated with all that passed, Launcelot stepped within the chamber, when instantly a voice forbade him, and a hand struck him down. All night he lay half senseless before the door, yet conscious of the glory within, of the fragrance, of the lights and the music, conscious also that he was excluded from all of this because of the sin which he

cherished in his heart and which he could not bring himself to cast aside.

Another time Launcelot lay before a chapel by the roadside, and as he rested there a knight was brought to the place in a curtained litter. He was ill and seeking ease from pain. All night he prayed and cried out that the healing might be brought to him.

At last, as Launcelot looked, he saw lights upon the altar of the ancient chapel. There was no one visible, but a silver cup was uncovered, and rich fragrance filled the air. The suffering knight crawled within the door which Launcelot had sought in vain to enter. He dragged himself upon his knees to the altar, kissed it, and touched his lips to the cup, and immediately he was healed.

He stood up without assistance, and presently departed with his squire. He called out to Launcelot upbraiding him, however, because he had not entered the chapel, and although the Divine power he invoked had healed his weakness, he was still so deep in his sins that he

could not resist the temptation to carry away the sword and helmet of Sir Launcelot. He felt, apparently, that there was no wrong in robbing an unconverted man. It is in such incidents as this that one finds the difference in religious spirit which distinguishes the two groups of poems, for to the author of the Quest the church is so largely the vehicle of grace, that frequently the instrument entirely overpowers the interior sentiment which alone can be of any importance.

The evolution of soul, however, is traced with much discrimination in Launcelot. There came a time in his life when the consciousness of his treachery to Arthur destroyed the pleasure of his love for Guinevere. The terrible moment arrived when he saw himself arrayed against his King, and after the death of Arthur and Guinevere, Launcelot gave up the world. He entered a monastery, and devoted himself to good works and to saintly meditation. He felt, at last, that death was near, and was given the promise of the bishop that he should be

attended by the brothers in his passing hours, and should receive the ministrations of Holy church, with every formality.

Launcelot ate little and slept less in those days. He spent many hours in profound contemplation; and the truths which were revealed to him brought him great happiness. One night when he was ill, thinking death was near, he sent for the bishop. His friend came and administered extreme unction, though he assured Launcelot that he would yet live many years. Shortly afterward the bishop awakened one night laughing loudly. When the brothers asked him what had amused him so greatly, he replied: "I saw Launcelot's body carried up to Heaven with many angels, and everything was so merry that I laughed aloud!"

They went to Launcelot's chamber to see that all was well with him, and they found that it was indeed well. He lay stiff and cold, but the sweetest smile that ever was seen was upon his face, and the room was filled with

spicy and delicious fragrance, that same fragrance which Launcelot had known the meaning of before, but always when he was excluded from the presence which it surrounded and revealed. In that hour, when his penance was finished, and victory was near, the Grail had entered his chamber, and the visitors who bore it accompanied his soul to the Heaven to which he had at last attained.

The death of Launcelot represents the final triumph over the flesh, and the attainment of the spirit to that point of knowledge and supremacy when temptation is vanquished, in fact obliterated. The struggle of Launcelot had been so severe that his victory was doubly precious, and the reader's sympathy rises more and more for the hero who has conquered, and who, in spite of all that he overcame, was so humble that he never believed himself worthy of reward.

Notwithstanding the monkish zeal and asceticism of the narrative, the appreciation of the poet for the beauty and joy of God's presence in

the heart, manifests itself everywhere. The atmosphere of the cell of the devotee is evident; it is that of one who has craved the privilege of resigning every joy and pleasure of earth, certain that Heaven would be vouchsafed to him in return. The spirit of the solitary is in every story of Galahad; it is that of Saint Anthony who advances with the infant Jesus in his arms, or Saint Augustine, to whom the City of God has been revealed. The halo about the prophet's head radiates everywhere, and the voice of the angel is heard, with the assurance that this is the place of peace. Saint Francis and his ecstasy return to us, as we read of the old harper who sang to Sir Bors, and the death of Launcelot is like the picturing of an exquisite tapestry fitting to be hung in a great cathedral.

In the poems of Percival or Parsifal, however, we come back to the world, bringing the spirit of Heaven with us. Chrestiens de Troyes, in his long and occasionally tedious epic of *Percival*, reveals the varied realm of chivalry with all its charm. He takes us past

many cathedral doors, but seldom within them, and his faith has in it the same element of the open air, the spreading trees, and the inner voice which marks that of Wolfram von Eschenbach. The *Parzival* of the latter, however, is by far the greatest of Grail poems. It is significant, not only for its variety and wealth of poetic incident, but for the knowledge of life and the law of conduct which it displays. The poem of Chrestiens de Troyes in comparison is tame and wearisome, and the profound knowledge of mystical truth which Wolfram reveals, is only superficially suggested by his predecessor. The incidents which Chrestiens repeats dryly, as if only half realizing their import, are related with enthusiasm and spirit by Wolfram, evincing an eager desire that all their hidden significance should be laid bare.

The altruism, and the duty of service, which are so repeatedly insisted upon by Wolfram, are felt also by Chrestiens, but less profoundly. The advice which the hermit gave to Percival in Chrestiens' poem, breathes the very spirit of the

philosophy which Wolfram elaborates at greater length. The knight is admonished to seek the company of worthy men and ladies of fair repute, but never to refuse his aid to any who are in trouble or in need. It is his duty to succor the orphan and the widow, to be at the call of the unfortunate. He is told also that the Lord loves humility, and that to seek the Holy Presence he must put vain glory far from him.

In Wolfram's *Parsifal* we have a scheme of life presented to us, an ideal of the growth of the spirit in the human environment, which is different in its fine analysis from anything discovered elsewhere in the Grail poems.

Parsifal is the incarnated soul seeking truth and fitted to discover it, and the Grail symbolizes this highest treasure, the greatest revelation to man.

Wolfram traces the history of his hero from its beginning. Like Galahad, Parsifal is born to great achievement, and must receive a noble heritage from both his parents. His

father, therefore, was the knight and King Gahmuret, who not only inherited wide lands, but gentle courtesy. Gahmuret in his youth traveled far, and fell in love with Belakane, a Saracen queen, dark skinned but beautiful and true; she was worthy of the passionate and devoted love which her Christian husband bestowed upon her. There is no suggestion within the poem that Belakane was without the pale of Christian love because of her Saracen and heathen lineage; and it seems as if the old poet had introduced the episode to remind us that all men are God's children. Such a sentiment is more familiar today than in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, when the spirit of the crusades, while it nourished mystical religion, still drew sharp lines as to the worthiness of the converted and unconverted soul.

Gahmuret did not weary of his beautiful heathen bride; but a longing for home rose in his heart, a yearning for the religion and familiar environment of his youth; so one day he bade farewell to his bride, and started

on his journey to the scenes of his childhood, long since deserted.

Arrived once more upon his paternal territory, he took part in a tournament which had been heralded far and wide. It was to be held for the bestowal of no less a prize than the hand of the fair queen, Herzeleide, who, a widowed virgin, offered herself to the successful champion of the lists. Gahmuret cared nothing for the queen or her possessions. He was rich, and his mind and imagination were still warmed by the image of his dark enchantress in the Saracen land. Moreover, another face had risen in his memory, the face of Anflise, who had charmed him in his youth, and who might still be won. So he entered the lists of the tournament for honor alone, caring for none of the outward inducements which were offered the successful champion.

No arm so strong as Gahmuret's was found among the assembled knights, however, and nobody so well trained in all chivalrous combat; no horse so well fitted to every chivalrous en-

counter; and he was pronounced the victor and must surely receive the prize for which he had contended.

Gahmuret had not sought Herzeleide, but she was beautiful and wise. Her rearing had known the environment of Mont Salvat. She was the sister of Amfortas, and in her youth she had walked in that wonderful procession which bore the Grail before the eager eyes of its devotees. Gahmuret soon loved his wife more deeply than he had loved any other, and we appreciate the delicate feeling of the old poet who would teach us through these incidents, which describe the winning of Gahmuret's wife, that the purest and holiest love is free from passion, and sometimes rises without the admixture of the latter. The husband and wife cherish each other because wisdom and beauty, courage and chivalry and high ideals are united, and from such love heroes are born.

Herzeleide was endowed with the steadfast and noble soul which makes a woman capable of any sacrifice. She gave her whole heart to

her husband. She wished to feel his valor in all its fullness, and so she compelled him to wear her silken shirt over his armor. When he returned it to her, hacked and torn, stiffened with his blood, she wore it next her skin and delighted in it. Before the future became the present, its secrets were revealed to her, and when her husband was absent, her spirit accompanied him. So she saw him in a vision one day when he was hurled from his horse and killed; she was warned also of the destiny of her son who was not yet born.

When the body of her lord was brought to her, the grief of Herzeleide was very deep. She felt that the world had shown her all its joy, and there was nothing for her in future but to rear her son properly. All the sorrow of her life had come to her through warfare; and the vision of her son's future told her that he should be a great knight, knowing many trials. She realized how dangerous was a palace for the rearing of a youth, and so she made her decision. She gave up all her royal splendor, her state and her

dignities, and went into the forest with her infant. There he should live the simple life of poverty. He should never hear the words chivalry, knighthood; he should never know that he was a King. The birds and squirrels should be his companions, his mother and the wood cutters his instructors. The temptations of wealth and power would be far from him, and peace must remain his attendant.

The mother thought, as many other mothers have believed, that she could control the destiny of her boy; that she could select for him his career, shield him from the ills which threatened him, and keep him for her own comfort, guiding his nature through the intricacies of her particular pattern of existence. Her wisdom revealed the future to her, and taught her the secret of many mysteries, but it did not show her the child's inherent right to freedom, and the subordination of the parent to its unfoldment.

So the mother and the boy lived together in the forest. They were cared for by a few rus-

tics who were forbidden to mention the name of King Arthur in the boy's hearing, and were warned that he was to know nothing of knight-hood or chivalry, or his own rank.

The boy made himself a bow and arrows and a javelin and became expert in their use. He learned all the forest lore, became familiar with the denizens of the woods, and with every secret of their habitations. He shot the birds with his arrows, but when he found them lifeless and without song, he brought them to his mother weeping, and would not shoot the feathered songsters again.

He lay under the trees listening to their choruses, until his heart swelled with the strange sorrow of the poet; and he wept once more in his mother's arms. She was troubled over his suffering, and thought only of preventing farther grief. "I will set snares for them and kill them if they cause you sorrow, my son!" she cried.

The boy, however, had seen the mystery of the end of their sweet lives. "Would you kill

the pretty birds for that?" he asked reproachfully, and the mother recognized the sin of her selfishness. As their conversation went on, the boy asked the wonderful questions which dawn upon us all, of God and creation. "What is God, mother?" "I will tell you, dear son, without mockery," she replied. "God is brighter than the day, and yet he reveals himself to us in a face like that of man. Son, forget not this teaching, and pray to him in thy need, for his truth ever brings us help. There is another who is called the master of Hell, and who is made of black untruth; turn thy thought from him, and also from the vacillation of doubt."

The words *liechter denn der tag*, more light than the day, applied to God, and *der ist swarz*, descriptive of the Devil, suggest to us the origin of Herzeleide's faith, and the source of her asceticism, for these are terms familiar in the Manichæism so prevalent in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and which had undoubtedly inspired the imagination of the

author of Parsifal. The dominating idea of Manichæism was the resistance of evil and the overcoming of the flesh. It taught the danger of indulgence; the virtue of renunciation, and drew sharply the distinction between respect to outward form and that of true worth which rises from within.

The boy who listened to such instructions expected not only to follow God's commands, but to see him, and so it happened that shortly afterwards, as Parsifal was shooting his arrows in the forest, he saw a brilliant and glittering cavalcade come through its archways. A company of knights in shining armor mounted upon prancing chargers, woke the primitive echoes with the ring of their steel and the clash of spurs. As the boy saw them his heart was filled with reverence. This surely was what his mother meant. This was light, glory, brilliance. This must be God!

He kneeled in the pathway before them, so that they were obliged to pause, and prayed their blessing. At first the only answer the boy

received was laughter and mockery. "We are not God," they cried, "we are men." But the boy knew better than that. "I have seen men working in the forest," he replied, earnestly. "They are not beautiful and shining like you, they are ugly and wear common clothes. If you are not men, tell me what are you?"

Then growing more serious, and somewhat interested in this strange wild-eyed youth who had so abruptly stopped their progress, the knights responded, "Well, perhaps we are more than simple men, we are *knights!*"

The boy had never heard the word, nor that of chivalry which followed, nor the name of King Arthur. His father and his uncle had been cherished and famous knights of the Round Table, and as he listened a new life waked within him. Dreams of glory, ideals of which he had never before been conscious, rose in his imagination, conjured into sudden reality by the magic of those mysterious expressions.

He ran away to his mother filled with new aspirations, eager for strange enterprises.

“Mother!” he cried, “give me a horse and armor! I am going to King Arthur’s court!”

Into many a mother’s heart, perhaps, has fallen the sorrow which invaded Herzeleide at that moment. Of what use was all her planning? Of what avail had been the resignation of everything that was pleasant in her royal dignities, if in spite of her sacrifice, she could not save her boy from the future which threatened him so darkly; if in the end she must lose him? There had been, however, much more than desire to keep her son for her own pleasure in the rearing the mother had appointed for him. She possessed a profound philosophy which reckoned most wisely on the value of truth when it was early unveiled to the human mind. She knew that her boy must leave her, but she intended to give him another lesson. If it did not bring him back to her, at least its results would not be wasted.

She busied herself, therefore, with his equipment. She ordered a calf to be killed, and from its skin, still warm, she made her son

leggings. She took a meal sack and cut three holes in it, one for his head, two for his arms. Then she commanded the oldest horse in the forest stables to be led out. He was so thin that his bones almost pierced the skin, so weak that he could scarcely bear up the lusty youth upon his back; and with no weapon except the javelin, to the use of which he was accustomed, Parsifal rode away.

He was so elated with the prospect of the glorious achievements that awaited him that he did not even turn to say farewell to his mother. This last shock of sorrow and disappointment was more than the poor queen could endure, and she fell heartbroken never to rise again, while Parsifal rode gaily on, not dreaming of the wound he had given his best friend.

The intention of the author in describing the birth and rearing of Parsifal is very significant. The name of the hero's mother, *Herzeleide*, means sorrow-of-the-heart, and it was not selected by accident. So far in the history of humanity its saviors have been born of one

mother—sorrow-of-the-heart—and the discipline of suffering, seems to have been necessary in order to wean mankind away from absorption in material things, to a true comprehension of its spiritual destiny.

The incarnated soul felt the shadow of its environment, and would not look toward the light until every other avenue of vision was cut off, then suddenly, when the eyes were filled with that wonderful revelation, the poet forgot everything else and sang only of the light.

Since so many poets have sung, and true philosophers have spoken, the world is learning that to sing of the light makes it manifest, and the new race may begin with a frank and pure conception of its ideals through the evolution of which it must advance to constantly increasing wisdom. The mission of sorrow was a noble one, but mankind will gladly say farewell to its dark instructress, and welcome the messenger of peace and love who rises white-robed and glad-faced out of the Heaven of an enlightened consciousness and

commands us to build our world of joy and harmony, of fragrance and sunshine.

Whenever we pass a great turning point in our lives, events succeed each other with great rapidity; and lessons multiply so fast that we can scarcely pause to note their ministry. Before Parsifal left his mother she had given him many instructions as to what he should do in the great world; and among other things she said, "When you see a pretty girl, take a kiss from her lips, but seize also her rings and her ornaments, they will be useful to you. If you meet a man with white hair, however, stay with him as long as possible, for he will teach you wisdom."

As the youth rode on he saw a beautiful pavilion glittering among the trees, such as a knight was wont to carry with him upon his expeditions of adventure, when he wished the solace and company of his fair lady. Parsifal had ridden far and was hungry, so he alighted from his steed and entered the great tent, delighting his eyes with luxuries he had never

dreamed of. He discovered the store of food, and feasted bountifully, and then lifting a curtain, found himself suddenly in the presence of Jeschute, the mistress of the establishment. He tore off her bracelets and ornaments, her necklace and rings, and obedient to his mother's instructions stole a kiss before departing. He rode away, leaving distress and heartbreak behind him once more, but happy in his ignorance and foolishness. The apparent cruelty of Parsifal in these early experiences undoubtedly figures for us that heedless selfishness of undeveloped youth, which in a strong nature must frequently expend itself before wisdom can enter, and the knowledge of the real self exert its influence.

In Parsifal's career, whenever he has passed through a significant experience, he meets Sigune, and she undoubtedly symbolizes that higher knowledge which becomes ours through contact with the world, and results in the gradual elimination of selfishness which follows the awakening of better qualities. So, as Parsifal

rode on, he encountered Sigune mourning over the death of her lord, Schionatulander, and though the youth was ready enough to seize the ornaments from a beautiful young woman, he could not pass by with indifference when any one was in sorrow. He paused, therefore, to inquire what he could do and learned many things. Sigune asked his name, and he replied, "In my home they called me always dear boy, sweetheart, mother's darling."

"But you have a name," said Sigune, "and it is a noble and good one. Your name is Parsifal, and it means 'to pierce the middle,' for love pierces to truth as surely as it has plowed furrows in your mother's heart."

Then she told him of his father's noble origin; of the kingdom to which he was heir; of his mother's wisdom, and of many things which it is well for the youth to know. He left her at last, happier, for the fool's garments are worn more easily when the wearer has learned that his father is a king.

Herzeleide knew that when she sent her son

forth in the garb of a fool he would find difficulty in receiving the recognition due his station and his mission. The world judges from exteriors, and rates the gentleman according to the cut of his garments. At the same time the true prophet is frequently obliged to know himself and speak his message while wearing the motley hose of his class. He listens to scoffs and jeers; he is buffeted and roughly handled; but if he is true to his inspiration, if he knows his father is the King, and holds fast to the knowledge which is within, he will conquer at last; no matter what storms bluster about his pathway, no matter what mountains rear themselves in his course, there is light at the end. The sun sets over green grass and blooming flowers.

All these truths are told us in the immediately succeeding events of Parsifal's story. Upon leaving Sigune he encountered Ither the red knight, who rode back and forth outside the walls of Camelot, challenging the world to a contest for his inheritance. When Parsifal

approached him, he besought him to carry to King Arthur his challenge; and Parsifal gladly accepted the proffer, and rode into the great hall of Arthur's castle, the strangest squire that ever appeared for a noble champion. Parsifal thought nothing of himself, however. He did not see the sneers of Sir Kay, the ill-tempered steward, nor the tittering of the ladies and pages. He threw down the gauntlet of the red knight, and then, kneeling, prayed Arthur for the arms and accoutrements which befitted his own estate. The heart of the King was gentle, and he saw the nobility of the youth beneath his absurd costume. "Wait until tomorrow," he said, "and I will provide for you." He could not well say more, for he must consider how far the sneers he saw were justifiable before he endowed so curious an aspirant with
4, knighthood.

Parsifal was impatient, however; what hero is not? "I will not wait! do but give me leave, and I will take horse and armor from this knight who challenges you so haughtily!"

The King hesitated again, for he loved the boy, and he felt that to grant his request must be but to send him to his death. Sir Kay broke in upon his meditations with his rough voice and brutal counsel. Kay never saw beneath the surface and perceived only what appealed to self interest. "Let him try the battle!" he exclaimed, "you are the better off which ever way it results, for in either case you are rid of a nuisance. We should give dogs for boars' heads!"

The idealist frequently yields to the vigorously expressed judgment of the man of the world, and so the King assented and Parsifal rode away. The knights and ladies ran to the window to see the singular champion depart on his mission. As they looked, a youth who had been dumb from birth spoke intelligibly, and the Lady Kunneware laughed aloud. She had never smiled, and a wise woman had said that she could not laugh until her eyes rested on the greatest knight of the world. Kay remembered the prophecy; and he struck her

so rudely upon the mouth that she fell to the floor. So it is, that, when a new truth is given to mankind, the first to perceive it are those who are less gifted than their fellows, and their recognition of what they see is frequently greeted with jeers and abuse, possibly the stake.

Parsifal rode on meanwhile, and delivered his challenge to Ither the red knight. The surprise of the latter may be imagined. Was this the antagonist that Arthur sent against him? This the champion who should stand for the chivalry of the Round Table? The knight turned his horse about and rode at Parsifal with leveled lance. It needed only a touch of the weapon in so skilled a hand to hurl the boy from his wretched charger, and with almost any combatant the encounter would have ended there. But Parsifal did not understand defeat—the earnest advocate, the enthusiastic devotee, never does. He picked himself up from his overthrow, took in his hand the little javelin, the only defense he possessed, and threw it with a sure aim. Strange that so weak a

weapon should conquer so mighty an adversary! The little javelin found the one defective spot in the vizor of the red knight. It entered his brain and he fell lifeless at the feet of Parsifal.

The boy sought in vain to loosen the armor from the body of his vanquished opponent. He knew nothing of the fastenings, and was in danger of destroying it through his awkwardness, when Iwanet found him. The page had been sent out by the courtiers to discover what was the result of the strange combat, and to bring back news, as was supposed, of how the fool had been slain. He arrived in time to save the armor of Ither, and instruct Parsifal in its uses. He undid the helmet, the greaves, and the cuirass, and as he assisted Parsifal to bind his own limbs in the strange knight's defenses, he remarked:

"You are oddly clad for a gentleman! The knights I know wear silken hose beneath their armor. You must cast aside these rough calf-skin leggings!"

"Those leggings," said Parsifal, "are the gift

of my mother's love. I shall wear them till they drop off!"

Iwanet bound the greaves about the coarse leggings, no doubt, with many mingled queries; he learned a lesson in chivalry which with all his courtly rearing he had not known before. Parsifal had established his courage and efficiency in his first combat. The prophet had been recognized in the fool's garments, but his education had only begun. He knew nothing of the ways of the world. He could not have *courtoisie*, as Wolfram quaintly remarked, because he had not traveled. The prophet must be instructed in all that concerns *savoir faire*, in order that he may hold his own among men and not be put to shame for ignorance of those little amenities which are accounted a symbol of elegance and station, by those who deem such things the first essentials. One day, as Parsifal came to the entrance of a lofty castle at evening, he saw a white-haired man and, remembering his mother's counsels, asked his hospitality. Gurnemanz admitted him

gladly, for he recognized the inner nobility of the knightly stranger.

Parsifal stayed in the castle many weeks, and Gurnemanz taught him much that was good for him to know. The wisdom of Gurnemanz was not of the lofty, intuitional sort with which Parsifal was naturally so well endowed. He was familiar with courts, with men and women, and all that concerns their outward bearing toward one another. He knew what was fit and according to the law of decorum; what was boorish. Parsifal had been brought up in the forest without that courtly rearing which was the natural outward panoply of the gentleman and the accomplished knight. He was the "fool" of all the Grail stories, "the clown," which rustic youth must always seem to eyes accustomed to judging only from the exterior.

True etiquette is that graciousness which springs from a sensitive consciousness of our relation to others. It is a part of the emanation from the highest self. The inexperienced

youth, however, seldom realizes this. Conscious of outward deficiency, he is eager to learn every lesson in regard to a fashionable bearing, and frequently lays too much stress upon the mere letter of the law of etiquette. Parsifal experienced this to his cost somewhat later. Meanwhile he had reason to congratulate himself for the kindness of Gurnemanz. The old knight loved him and would gladly have married him to his daughter, but the voice within was already warning Parsifal to take up his onward march. He could not linger in gentle dalliance nor be bound by flowery chains.

In the evolution of Parsifal the reader is reminded constantly that he has a mission, and that a great undertaking is before him, but the hero himself meets each moment of his life with simplicity, and a beautiful unfolding of character. He is greater for every yesterday. While Galahad is set aside from the strong current of distinctly human feeling, Parsifal is caught in it, and fitted through it for the trials and encounters which are before

him. Galahad cannot know the love of woman. Parsifal is prepared for the great love of humanity by all that is noble and elevating in the sex nature. His love, however, is always free from selfishness and passion. The author makes the same point in the description of Parsifal's love as in that of his father. The hero's love must be that noble affection which is free from selfish impulse.

Thus he delivered Kondwiramur, whose castle had been besieged. He knew that the hand of the lady should be bestowed upon the victor. His imagination had been touched by another fair face, however, and he thought coldly of his bride, until one evening he remembered suddenly the admonitions of Gurnemanz as to how a knight should treat a fair lady. He realized that his conduct was ungentle, unchivalrous, and he rose then and there to claim his wife. The love which glowed within him at length was perfect, pure, and satisfying.

Kondwiramur remained forever the lady

of his dreams and his heart. He was never false to her. In all his wanderings his affection turned to her as the mariner to the pole star; and no fascinating amour could even tempt him. Yet, wherever he went, conquering far and wide in his valiant and powerful errantry, he never sent his conquests to Kondwiramur. That would have savored of vainglory and boastfulness. Every knight who fell before the powerful arm of Parsifal must hie him to Arthur's court and make his obeisance to Kunneware. The lady who was so humble, who had been shamed and insulted on his account, must be glorified by his achievements. So the name of Kunneware became celebrated through the prowess of the greatest cavalier of Arthur's time.

Is there not a quaint and charming bit of allegory in the little incident? Is it not the praise of the humble? "Blessed are the MEEK, for they shall inherit the earth," said the gentle teacher long ago; and the story of Kunneware and her patient waiting is the poet's sermon

on this very point. The glorious knight came for whom she was persecuted, and through the uncomplaining endurance of persecution she was ennobled. So, far and wide the name of Kunneware was imprinted upon the annals of a chivalry which had remained impregnable until that moment; and all the champions and fair dames of Arthur's court were astonished at the spectacle of those who arrived to prostrate themselves at the feet of Kunneware. There came one, at last, who laid his heart as well as his prowess before the gentle lady; and so she found her happiness as well as fame and honor through the humility that had been her protection.

Parsifal's life flowed on serenely within the castle of Kondwiramur. But a day arrived when the fever of unrest rose within him too high to be stilled. He said farewell to his love, and rode away to complete the mission which was before him.

Frequently in life the soul is driven from its moorings, from happiness, from ease and

comfort, by the striving of an impulse within, which it does not understand. The soul must grapple with the events which it is born to encounter, and so it was with Parsifal. He advanced to greet his fate, never dreaming it was so near him.

One day, when he had ridden hard and was weary, he came to a wide sea on which there were many boats. In one was a man fishing, who wore a strange garb. His cap was made of brilliant peacock's feathers, and he was wrapped in a purple mantle. In all the Grail stories the ailing King is called a fisher, and as the words sinner and fisher are very similar in both ancient and modern French, the confusion may have arisen in this way, which made it necessary for the poet to introduce Amfortas as a fisherman who took no pleasure in his diversion.

Parsifal called to the fishers and asked where he might obtain shelter for the night. They pointed to the distant horizon, saying, "yonder is a castle where you may be received!" Par-

sifal rode in the direction indicated and came presently to a great building upon a lofty rock. The drawbridge was down and he rode into the courtyard, where he was welcomed with most generous hospitality. A page came to take his horse. A bath was prepared for him and fresh clothing made ready. It was customary in those days to provide a bath and a change of garments for the incoming guest. The knight errant who set out for adventures, and wandered here and there, as conquest or disaster prompted, could not take with him a traveling wardrobe, and he depended upon the courtesy of his hosts for cleanliness and refreshment. Unusual honor was shown to Parsifal, however, for an attendant brought him the mantle of the queen, *Repanse de Schoie*, with the request that he should wear it, and the queen did not bestow her garments upon all wandering guests.

In connection with the figure of *Repanse de Schoie* we find another of those quaint and charming allegorical conceits, of which Wolfram's poem is so full. *Schoie* is Wolfram's

fashion of pronouncing *joie* or *joy*, and *Repanse* is made up of the old French verb to recall or remember—*repanser*—so that the name of the queen means *Remembrance of Joy*. She is the one who carries the Grail in the procession of the Grail ceremony, which passes at stated intervals before the suffering King. We are told that the presence of the Grail had become almost unendurable to Amfortas, and must have brought to his imagination a poignant recollection of the joys of the past, of which he was no longer worthy. *Repanse de Schoie*, who carried the Grail before King Amfortas, would therefore not be at all a suitable person to bear it in the great procession which assembled after Amfortas was healed, and Parsifal had become the pure and noble ruler of the treasure of humanity. So *Repanse de Schoie* was married to Feirifisz, Parsifal's brother, and no longer bore the Grail under the new régime, but went out into the world, as beautiful maidens had done previously, to carry back and forth among mankind remembrance of that joy which she

had witnessed through all the years of youth, and happy childhood.

Clothed in the mantle of the queen, Parsifal was filled with peace and happiness; every one showed him courtesy; trouble and weariness vanished from his consciousness. He was escorted to a great hall, where the inhabitants of the castle were assembled, awaiting the banquet hour. As Parsifal took his seat among the others, the walls upon one side were pushed back, and he seemed to look into an adjoining and greater apartment. He saw a white haired old King reclining upon a couch, who, he learned afterwards, was Titurel. Near by was another King whom he recognized as the fisher who had directed him to the castle. He was very ill, and could neither sit, lie nor stand without suffering. There were great tables in the hall, and in the farther apartment were a hundred couches, upon each of which four knights reclined. The tables were furnished with golden platters and goblets, and four knights ate and drank from each one. These were the

knights who guarded the Grail, but Parsifal looked ignorantly upon it all, not knowing how rare and significant was the occasion at which he was permitted to be present.

After the great steel doors were rolled back, two young maidens entered, followed by eight others, who proceeded to prepare the tables for the banquet. Eight more maidens entered bearing torches which spread balsamic odors through the apartment, and carrying a glittering green stone which lighted up the vast chamber with its soft radiance. Then came eighteen more maidens in rhythmical procession, clothed in green mantles, and at last in the midst of the procession, walking alone, Repanse de Schoie entered, bearing the Grail.

She was clothed in green velvet, her face was shining and her eyes were bright. She walked in stately measure, as if she felt the value of the treasure in her hands, and as the maidens grouped themselves about her she shone among them like a star. The sweet odors from the torches filled the air, the soft radiance from the

jewel penetrated everywhere. Pages entered with napkins and silver basins, and the guests bathed the hands and face, in preparation for the beginning of the feast. As soon as the Grail passed in solemn procession, the tables were covered with good things. He who eats at the table of the Grail has all that heart can desire; so each knight found upon his plate what he best loved, and the wine which he drank from the goblet was that which appealed most agreeably to his palate. The condiments had been placed upon the board in tiny receptacles of gold and silver; thus each could flavor his food as he preferred; nothing was wanting to render the feast refreshing and memorable to all who shared its profusion.

The only one who did not rejoice was Amfortas. His suffering seemed to increase with the appearance of the Grail, that had brought comfort and pleasure to every one else. He writhed upon his couch in torture, and as Repanse de Schoie paused before him to show the respect that was due the King, it seemed as if the

anguish of the afflicted monarch must end in dissolution. All looked upon him with sympathy, but none seemed surprised at his state or appeared at the moment to think of offering him any alleviation. There was no dancing, no manifestation of hilarity. There were no knightly games, during the banquet. All was restrained out of respect to the sorrowing and suffering King.

As the pageant of the beautiful banquet passes before our eyes, and we recreate for ourselves the magnificent hall with its assemblage of noble knights and stately ladies, we almost forget that this can be anything but a feast, where delicious viands and fragrant wines are spread for the weary traveler.

The Grail, the jewel, the shining faces, the glittering torches, the suffering King, and the hero who has asked the hospitality of the house, surely these are real figures of the actual world, and not the elements of an allegory.

What is the mystery of the Grail, which Parsifal failed to comprehend, or is there any

mystery about it in the mind of the old poet who tells the story? Wolfram's use of numbers reveals to us the secret of a symbolism which was perfectly familiar to many a wandering troubadour of his day, who had traveled far, come in contact with many thinking people, and had endeavored to probe the secret of the universe. Why do we live, why should we have faith in a spiritual truth which can never take tangible form before our eyes? Wolfram must have asked himself this question many times. It was not safe to ask or answer such questions in the days when one church controlled the entire civilized world, and when its temporal power was feared everywhere. When such questions were propounded, therefore, both question and answer were veiled in a symbolism which only the initiate could comprehend. The *Kabbala* was not written when Wolfram sang his *Parsifal*, but its secret of numerical mysteries was well known to students. Both within and without the church there were men who pondered over the problems of creation,

as thinkers must ever do; such thinkers knew the phraseology of certain combinations of numbers, and would never betray the secrets concealed within them. It was most natural, therefore, that the poet should have thought of this method of revealing to us his message. The grouping of numbers in the Grail procession, and during the banquet, tells its story to any student of numerical symbolism. The repetition of the numbers four and eight especially is significant, for four and eight are symbolic of the Tetragrammaton in the ancient Kabbalistic philosophy.

Four is manifestation, the creation, the earth in visible form, and is figured by the four Hebrew letters of the word Javeh. The symbolism of eight is broader. It represents the names of Javeh, or God manifested, and Eheieh, or God unmanifested—that is, the spiritual power which is behind its visible demonstration. The four knights sleeping on one bed and drinking from one cup thus stand for the manifested of the world, the material which

we see and know, and the incarnated man, to whom the secrets of creation must be revealed. The procession of Grail maidens in their entering groups and convolutions, the succession of groups of four, eight, twelve and twenty-four, illustrate the mysteries of God's truth made known to man.

After Repanse de Schoie has entered the hall, seven maidens separate themselves from the others and advance to meet her. We remember suddenly all the symbolism concealed in the number seven. It is the number descriptive of man, for man is made up of the square and the triangle, the latter finding representation in the three highest qualities of soul and spirit, and the former standing for the four more animal functions of the intelligent being. Thus the seven maidens stepping forward to receive the beautiful queen remind us of how eagerly man rises to obtain that highest gift, the knowledge of God's love and presence in himself, which is typified by the Grail. The entire movement of the procession is a hymn

of praise and revelation, a glorification of the Divine in man, the at-one-ment of earth and Heaven.

To Parsifal the scene he had witnessed was incomprehensible. Who was this King whose suffering was almost unbearable to the wandering knight, and why was he himself treated with such exceeding courtesy? During the progress of the banquet a sword was brought to him of unexampled richness, its hilt was made up almost of a single ruby, and the blade was most beautifully chased. His host begged him to accept it, saying, "If you know its secret it will be of great use to you, as it was to me before this terrible illness came upon me, from which you see I suffer." The question trembled upon Parsifal's lips, as it had a dozen times already, "Why do you suffer? What ails you?" but he remembered what Gurnemanz had told him, "If you are a fool, don't betray your ignorance, don't ask questions!" and he repressed the desire, accepted the sword as coldly as if he was accustomed to

such gifts and such adventures upon his travels, saying good-night indifferently to the guests and the suffering and courteous King.

The chamber to which the guest was shown was most sumptuous. The bed upon which he was to sleep was one which would have roused the envy of poverty, and he was attended upon every hand by knights and pages, who vied with each other to show him sufficient attention. When he waked in the morning, however, all was changed. The great chamber in which he had gone to rest, so numerous guarded, was strangely empty. He called repeatedly, but no one answered. He found his clothing and armor beside his bed, and he put it on and descended the stairs to the hall which the night before had been filled with so splendid an assemblage. His footsteps re-echoed through its silent length and breadth. He went out into the courtyard, which was also deserted. He found his horse ready saddled in the stable as if for departure. There was neither man nor boy about the place, and

he saw no one until his horse's hoofs left the drawbridge. It suddenly occurred to him that there must be some one in the tower above, and he glanced up to see a black elfish face peering at him from the window. The creature broke out into taunting laughter, and screamed after him, "Oh, but you are a goose, a goose! Why did you not ask the question!"

The heaviness that descended upon the soul of Parsifal is easily imagined. We have all of us faced a moment in our lives when a decision is to be made. It presents itself in every light to the judgment. There are many considerations attached to its conclusion. On one side are the suggestions of worldly prudence, of personal interest, of selfishness. On the other generous instincts prompt to a line of conduct which appears hostile to our own profit, but which, nevertheless, is urged by all the nobler impulses. To follow it might be suicidal from a utilitarian standpoint, but Heaven would approve. The selfish instinct is followed. The eyes are turned away from that star-lighted

pathway the end of which is not visible ; blindly the footsteps stumble into the broader opening which leads to darkness and lamentation.

The discovery that the choice was a mistaken one is never slow in following the decision, and the soul learns in the anguish of realization all the foolishness of worldly prudence. It is never well to look backward, but there is a light emanating from within, by which past failure is frequently illumined, and the possibilities which stretch before us assume a new and different aspect.

Parsifal had scarcely passed the portals of the castle, before he found Sigune mourning over the embalmed body of her husband, which she held in her arms. She asked the knight where he had been, and as he looked back to point out the castle in which he had passed the preceding hours, he was astonished to observe that it seemed no longer visible. Without waiting to learn whether Parsifal had been permitted to enter, Sigune proceeded to explain the mystery of Mont Salvat.

She told of the illness and suffering of King Amfortas, of the wonderful sword which was within his gift, but which was useless unless one learned the blessing which must accompany it. She described the knight who would some day come to the castle and for whom every one waited. He needed only to ask the question as to why the King suffered and immediately Amfortas would be healed. Such love and pity must lie in the asking that the pain could not stay after that tenderness had been expressed.

Sigune told her listener of the knights who wandered months and years in the immediate vicinity of the castle and died without having seen it even, because they were not worthy to pass its portals. She painted in glowing colors the joy of admission, and in contrasting darkness the horror of a failure to comprehend and appreciate the glories that were there revealed. At last Parsifal was able to interrupt her eager description long enough to tell her that he had visited the castle.

"What!" she cried, "you have seen it? you have known the fragrance of the balsamic torches; you have perceived the suffering of the King? You have healed him, because, of course, you have asked the question!"

Then Parsifal was obliged to confess that he had witnessed all, but had said nothing, and Sigune poured her reproaches upon him. "Alas!" she cried, "thou, who art unblessed! on whom the curse must fall, because the wolf's tooth of remorse must gnaw thee with bitter pain! thou, shouldst have pitied the King for whom God would work a miracle! I should think," she added in conclusion, "such pity would have risen in thy heart thou couldst not help asking the question!"

Sigune refused to instruct Parsifal farther. "You are no longer worthy of my sympathy," she declared, "since you have been so bad hearted;" and she drove him from her to discover, if he could, the pathway of light he had so easily forsaken.

The point in Parsifal's development which

prevented his asking the question and healing the wounded King is indicated by Sigune's animated and hearty reproaches. *He lacked in love.* If his nature had been properly unfolded he could not have helped asking the question. It would have sprung to his lips so eagerly that no instinct of repression would have been quick enough to deny it utterance. The pity of which the poet speaks is that same pity which Dante describes, not commiseration for others, but a love so tender that it is touched invariably by the reality of all with which it comes in contact. Such pity is not withheld by any worldly or conventional scruples, and welling up in the heart the power of its divinity heals the King. It was not the simple interrogation, as we see, which rendered Parsifal capable of fulfilling the great mission of his life; but the condition of mind and soul which lay behind the question. If he had asked it perfunctorily and unlovingly it would have had no efficacy, but such asking would have been impossible, for as the circum-

stances were arranged, love alone could prompt the impulse, and perform the miracle.

Parsifal left Sigune humbled and sorrowful. He had failed utterly in his first great encounter with destiny; and with a nature like that of Parsifal, the only thing to do at such a moment was to pick up the broken threads of life and weave them better. He did not know that he would ever cross the threshold of Mont Salvat again; but in the days that followed each other in the future, he could be sure that a gentle spirit ruled, for there was no shadow of selfishness about him. Dominated by such a feeling he would naturally encounter difficulties from his past life, which the new spirit would overcome. It is a curious fact in human experience that we construct our own environment, by the thought force which emanates from us. Unspoken and often unconscious motive governs the action of events, and frequently we do not know what our will is doing for us.

Parsifal was ready to set right all his mis-

takes, and therefore the first person he met after leaving Sigune was Jeschute, the same fair lady from whom he had stolen the rings and the kiss, on that morning long ago when he had begun his life's adventures so gaily. This Jeschute, however, was very different from the happy bride of the past. In that day she was rich, gay, jeweled, and resplendent in her husband's love. Now he saw her, so thin and pale, so miserably clad that Parsifal had difficulty in recognizing her. She told him, weeping, that since the hour when he had invaded her privacy in such unwarranted fashion, her husband had doubted her truth, believed she had indulged in a base amour, and had abused and maltreated her in consequence. No menial could have been more cruelly handled, as was evident, but the worst unkindness of all lay in the injustice of her husband's accusation.

Parsifal realized as never before the mischief entailed by heedless and reckless conduct. He received another forcible lesson in the duty one

owes to others, and following so closely upon the terrible experience from which he had only just suffered, its rebuke was of double power.

He lost not a moment in his pursuit of Duke Orilus, the husband of Jeschute. He challenged him not only for the aspersion cast upon his own honor, but for his ungracious treatment of the lady he should have cherished as his most treasured possession, and he did not pause until the pride of the haughty noble was humbled in the dust. Then he commanded him to embrace his wife, beseech her pardon for all the indignities he had so causelessly put upon her, and restore her henceforth to her rightful place by his side. This done, the duke must make one more in the long list of knights who already added lustre to the name of Kunneware. The reconciled lovers therefore began their journey toward Camelot, and Parsifal was comforted to realize that in this case he had been able to restore the happiness which his heedless and selfish action had so rudely broken.

Parsifal's life had been from the beginning an evolution which led him on from stage to stage of that perfection which he was fitted to understand. Each individual moves in his own orbit of accomplishment; and there is no limit to the love and wisdom which he may radiate. It is often noticeable, however, that a significant crisis, which breaks suddenly the current of habitual thinking, opens the way to discoveries in progress of which we had not previously dreamed. What we do is henceforth with a purpose, and the thought which before ran heedlessly over beaten tracks, is directed toward a certain aim, and turned in a fixed and unalterable tendency.

From the moment of his great failure Parsifal was a different being. His life became a service. He had lacked in love, henceforth if he failed it should be from a superabundance of pitying tenderness. It should never be said of him again that he considered his own interest before that of another, that his heart was hard, nor his hand tardy of assistance.

In order to make us feel the springs of duty in Parsifal, Wolfram tells us with much fullness the adventures of Gawayne, the knight whose errantry is recited by all the poets who deal with Arthur's court, and who attribute to him various degrees of baseness and duplicity. In most cases the adventures of Gawayne are introduced with no other aim than to vary the monotony of knightly history; but in Wolfram's poems the encounters of Gawayne are narrated as a foil to the heroic exploits of Parsifal. Gawayne follows the white hart; conquers the green knight; combats and falls in love in endless variety and with unflagging perseverance. He is apparently as unwearied at the end of his adventures as in the beginning. In Wolfram's poem his career is as brilliant as elsewhere; but we are led to feel more acutely the weakness of the man behind the deed. The old poet, unlike most of his confreres, never forgets the importance of motive in action. Parsifal is the knight of the spirit dedicated to a great mission; and he

never describes him as mingling in affairs which will only bring him knightly honor. He combats always for a cause. He never slays for the glory of killing. If there is a maiden to be succored, a knight to be rescued, a fair one to be united to her husband, Parsifal undertakes the deed immediately, no matter how many battles he has fought during the day. He gladly and voluntarily brings his aid to all who are in need of it; and in his profession of war, he is frequently the messenger and minister of peace.

It is natural, therefore, that Parsifal, as Wolfram describes him, does not destroy the enchantment of the palace of Klingschor. This old magician appears in many of the Grail stories, and even when he is not mentioned by name, as in the *Quest*, the *Chatel mervail* and the *Lit mervail* are elements in the story, and illustrate the familiarity of the poet with the history of the enchanter. The palace of Klingschor represents the realm of sensuous temptation which is a part of human experi-

ence, and which many are obliged to pass through before they can give themselves to the higher life, and be dominated by spiritual impulses.

The knight, who undergoes the test of the marvelous castle, must endure every danger that could terrify the most resolute soul; if he is valorous and unconquerable to the end he achieves great things, not only for himself but for others. The test of Sir Bors, in the *Quest*, is an echo of the terrors of Klingschor's castle, although the magician is not mentioned; and at the end he is greeted with the fragrance of the Grail.

In Wagner's Parsifal, the composer, for the sake of dramatic fitness, makes Parsifal the conquerer of Klingschor's palace. Only the purest knight is able to withstand all the seductions that are offered there and remain true. The evolution of the hero's soul must be pictured in vividly enacted episodes for the purposes of the musical drama; so

so with this end in view, Wagner, very properly, subjects Parsifal himself to this supreme test.

With Wolfram, however, there is not the same necessity for conciseness; he does not bring Parsifal to the palace of Klingschor. He uses the episode, on the contrary, to contrast purpose with that which illustrates its absence—the lack of grasp or comprehension which wrecks so many lives. After Parsifal had seen the Grail, and had realized his own mistake in connection with it, nothing could distract his thought from the possibility of attaining it. Everything else seemed frivolous. The conquest of the horrors of the marvelous chamber in Klingschor's palace could not appeal to him. The palace did not exist as far as he was concerned; and it would never have occurred to him to cross the threshold.

With Gawayne it was far different. In Wolfram's poem he is never represented as base or wicked, but only frivolous and self indulgent. He lives in the realm of the senses, and has not determination enough to pull himself out of it.

When the story of the Grail interested the knights of the Round Table, Gawayne, like many others, entered upon its quest. But he took up the search for the Grail, not because his heart was stirred or his imagination roused, but because it was the last new sensation, offering him another opportunity to show what he could do and win renown.

It was perfectly natural, therefore, that Gawayne should undertake the task of breaking the spell which rested upon the knights and ladies who were gathered in Kling-schor's palace. Many had attempted it and failed. Gawayne would show them that he could succeed. So he entered the perilous chamber and slept in the marvelous bed, combating in succession all the horrors that rose to overwhelm him. The warriors, the beasts, the lion, all fell before his indomitable courage and his knightly arm. In the end Cawayne sank fainting, covered with wounds and unconscious, supposing himself overthrown.

He awoke to life again, however, to find him-

self the center of the most tender care. The beautiful Queen Orgeluse, who was the principal feminine figure of the palace, came with her maidens and drew Gawayne from the chamber where he had endured so much. He was a hero, they told him; he had conquered where all others had failed. Meanwhile there was apparently no result to Gawayne's brilliant success.

The horrors of the wonderful chamber and the marvelous bed had disappeared, but the palace was by no means restored to sobriety and high endeavor, while Gawayne forgot the Grail and all ideals, in a new love for the beautiful Queen Orgeluse. Gawayne had vanquished only to show what he could do, not with the slightest intention of carrying out any final achievement or purpose.

He married Queen Orgeluse, at last, and invited King Arthur and all his court to the marvelous castle to celebrate its freedom from enchantment and his own nuptials. Yet he died without having really loved any cause or person outside of himself, and without having

thought of subjugating the doughty antagonist who inhabited his own breast. He was like a large proportion of mankind, who live in the joy of the moment so eagerly that they miss altogether that larger happiness which rises only when we have been able to ignore the purely pleasurable element in our lives. The deeds of Parsifal always represent him as absorbed in a great aim, a profound current of thought, which renders him oblivious to all that is merely trivial and productive of vanity in this world. When he returned to Arthur's, court after many wanderings, he stood fixed in meditation forgetful of himself and of the importance attached to his reappearance at last in the brilliant circle of the court. He had seen three drops of blood upon the snow, and the charming contrast of red and white reminded him of his love for Kondwiramur. The memory of her was so absorbing, her figure, beautiful and gracious, so filled his field of vision, that he forgot all else, and stood for hours wrapped in thought. The knights and

ladies of the court, seeing this strange knight stand so long in absolute stillness, sent Gawayne at last to discover who he was, and whether he was insane or dumb, or perhaps a saint. Gawayne, seeing the three drops of blood upon the snow, immediately divined the cause of the knight's absorption, and throwing a cloth over them roused him from his trance.

His friend led him to the court, and all the delights of the world of love and chivalry unrolled themselves before Parsifal. The story of his brilliant deeds and noble life had preceded him. The knights who submitted themselves to Kunneware were not loth to celebrate the prowess of the champion before whom they had been forced to bite the dust. Parsifal was received, therefore, as a conquering hero; and a banquet was set forth in his honor. It is never possible for the knight dedicated to the service of others, however, to forget his aim or his quest. In the silence of the night he sees it pictured before him, in the laughter of the

gayest company he hears its wailing reminder that he must persevere.

Thus, while the ladies and their cavaliers were gathered about the board of Arthur to do honor to the noblest champion of the hour, the messenger of Mont Salvat appeared among them. The figure of Kundry, the maiden who passes and repasses between Mont Salvat and the world, is not so picturesque in Wolfram's poem as she becomes later, in the great drama of Wagner. She was a message bearer only to the knights and ladies of the older story, and she came simply with the dignity which must attach to one who fitly performs an onerous duty. She wished to snatch her champion from the fascinations that began to glitter about him, and evidently symbolizes that stern sense of obligation and duty which will not be obliterated in the gayest surroundings. She is like the death's head of the Roman banquet which cannot be ignored, no matter how eagerly we desire its absence. In the presence of the assembled company, therefore,

gathered to do him honor, Kundry told the pathetic story of Parsifal's failure, of his selfishness, and how he had left Amfortas to his sufferings.

Then with lowered voice and reverent tones she explained the mystery of the Grail. They had all heard of it before. This man whom they admired had been most highly honored. He had been present at the ceremony! He had eaten at the table of the Grail, and had been so stupid, so unawakened, that he had not recognized the privilege vouchsafed to him! He had satisfied his appetite and had thought it a common feast! He had drunk too much, perhaps, from the golden goblets, and therefore had failed to ask the question! One can imagine the scornful eyes that were turned upon Parsifal, and the flash of feeling that went round the table, transforming in an instant the sentiment that reigned in regard to the guest of the hour.

Kundry's words fell like nettles upon Parsifal's sensitive nerves. It seemed to him that his sin was too heinous ever to be forgiven.

What was all the honor of the world when he knew he had been recreant to the trust reposed in him, unworthy of the high opportunity which had been granted him!

"I cannot endure the sorrow that pursues me," he cried, "when I think that through my fault so many men suffer. It is through my weakness that the Grail has been again lost to the world. I can remember nothing but the longing to possess it once more. What anguish has followed me since I left Mont Salvat; and oh, Amfortas, what torments are thine!" he added, "and what has it availed thee that I once sat by thy side!"

From that moment until he found the Grail, Parsifal's days and nights were spent in wandering. His one desire was to find once more the castle of Mont Salvat, and as he could not succeed in this quest, he became daily more miserable and disheartened. He gave up the practice of religion, no longer respected the holy days of the church, and refused to believe in a God who had treated him, as he considered,

so unjustly. There was one part of religion which Parsifal never forgot, however, and that was his duty to others. No matter how sorrowful his heart might be, even if his days were heavy and his nights were long, Parsifal never turned his ear from the complaints of others, nor withheld his hand from righting their wrongs. His own anguish, instead of shutting him away from the suffering of the world, made him more tender toward it, and the greatness of his knighthood was revealed in the gentleness of his deeds.

One night, when he had wandered far, he came to an odd little hut in a deserted place; and stooping his head to the tiny window, asked if any one were within. Sigune's voice answered him. She had built over her husband's grave the shelter she inhabited, and she lived there alone, visited only by Kundry, who came every other night, as she informed Parsifal, and brought her food. She listened with great sympathy to Parsifal's melancholy story; and told him he had suffered enough in

expiation of his sin. "Follow Kundry when she comes to me again," she advised, "and she will lead you to Mont Salvat."

Parsifal's troubles were not, however, ended yet by any means. He was challenged by a knight, who was one of the guardians of the Grail, because he wandered too near the precincts of the sacred castle; and, at last, he was met by a travelling noble, who with his family was going, barefooted, on a pilgrimage to the cell of Trevrezent. The noble reproached Parsifal for riding in his armor on Good Friday, and was shocked at the reckless tone of his answer. Through him Parsifal was brought to the cell of Trevrezent, and there at last balm was poured into his wounded and bleeding heart. He learned, at first, many things which troubled him deeply, for the hermit told him how his careless departure had caused the death of his mother.

The episode of Parsifal's meeting with Trevrezent is one of the most charming in Wolfram's poem. The hermit is a reverend and

stately figure. For years he has lived in his cell on the mountain side, eating only herbs and fruit, drinking no wine. He has sought truth and righteousness, and found peace in the knowledge of God's law that has come to him in his restful and inspiring solitude. His retirement, however, was not a selfish one. His name was known through all the country side for his wisdom and good works. People came to him for counsel and guidance, and his love was apparently limitless in his dealings with his fellow man. He preached an intimacy of faith and love with the Divine which was not common in the Christianity of the day. "God is truth," he said, "and if you wait upon Him in sincerity and humility all things will be revealed to you."

Trevrezent talked long and earnestly with Parsifal, and taught him many truths concerning his checkered life. He listened patiently to the story of his shortcomings and reproved him with that loving tenderness which makes a reproof an inspiration.

“You must put aside anger and impatience,” he said, “and learn to love. We find God always by loving. His shining face appears to us in gentleness and instructs us in all our needs.”

Parsifal stayed with the hermit fourteen days, and when he left him he had become another man. Different ideals had taken possession of him. All the bitterness had left his heart and love reigned there instead. He was no longer anxious about the Grail. He knew that when the moment came God would speak to him; and he would go to Mont Salvat, and this time heal the king. Meanwhile he must fulfill each duty which the day demanded, and not long for that consummation which God's hour would surely bring. He rode away, therefore, a new man, to begin a new life, for the Peace of Divine assurance had come to him, and he need no longer look back with anguish at that one event in his life which he would blot out.

Critics frequently blame Wolfram for leading his hero into the world again after he has dis-

covered the secret of Mont Salvat. They forget, however, that we are learning the history of the birth of a soul, and must mark each stage of its development. When the new way has been pointed out, the soul must grow in it before fruition follows. Parsifal had known bitterness and doubt; he could not know peace and love until he had lived under their influence; and he could not understand the knowledge of God until the blessing of His presence was manifest to him. He had sought with a raging and broken heart for the Grail. He has learned at last that he cannot find it, but that God will reveal its secret when the soul is ready. Therefore, Parsifal returned to Arthur's court, and all the incidents of his stay there illustrate how far he was from being absorbed in the life which surrounded him.

One of the charming suggestions in the revelations which Trevrezent made to Parsifal was that in regard to his relationships. All the people of the Grail are united in ties of blood. Herzeleide was the sister of Repanse

de Schoie, of Trevrezent and Amfortas; the mother of Sigune was also their sister; Parsifal discovers to his surprise how intimate his connection is with these people and scenes in whom his life is so curiously and irretrievably bound up. There are so many subtle suggestions of a spiritual sort in the poem that we are tempted to find here a very curious one. We usually discover, after a moment of especial growth in our evolution, that we have many new relatives. Our lives are united closely to those of others by thousands of filaments so fine that sometimes we are late in learning their existence; but they point us to the kinship of the spirit, which is so different from that of the body, and which brings us into tender union with many who become henceforth our dearest relatives.

Parsifal's discovery of his brother is another suggestion in the way of the higher comradeship which is very beautiful. Feirifisz, the son of Belakane, came to Christian lands to find his father, and, meeting Parsifal, challenged

him to combat. They fought furiously until Parsifal was without a sword, and then when the champion of Christendom was very nearly conquered, the two discovered that they were brothers and embraced. It did not matter to Parsifal that Feirifisz was a Saracen and a heathen, he was his brother, and his heart went out to him with no hesitation. He brought him to Arthur, and a banquet was immediately given in honor of the foreign knight. It was while Parsifal sat at the table with Feirifisz that Kundry appeared, bringing information that Parsifal was to come to Mont Salvat, and assume the kingship of the Grail. In the moment of his new brotherhood, therefore, the crown came to Parsifal. Kundry informed him that he was allowed to take one knight with him to the castle, and he immediately selected his brother, although he was a heathen and unconverted. When God has entered the heart as love, we realize presently that there are no class distinctions in the real world, no hard lines of color and faith which

separate us from one another; in reality we are all the children of God, the Father, living in His bounty and care.

So Feirifisz went to Mont Salvat with Parsifal. He could not see the Grail, though he was not shut out from the chamber of the great ceremonial. There are mysteries into the knowledge of which we must grow, and therefore he could not perceive the shining wonder until he had been baptized, but there was no idea of excluding him because of a difference of hue and faith. Feirifisz saw and loved Repanse de Schoie, and as soon as he was baptized he was united in marriage to the beautiful queen, and they went back to the world to carry the story of the Grail and its wonderful meaning to suffering humanity.

Parsifal's trials were finally over. He had learned his lessons. He had asked the question; he had healed the king. Once more he stood in the vast chamber, and saw the steel doors roll back. Once more the maidens passed

in procession bearing the Grail, and this time Parsifal understood the meaning of it all. Bending over the suffering king, he whispered: "Uncle, what ails thee?" And instantly the miracle was accomplished, and Amfortas was healed. The King rose, most beautiful to look upon, and the perfection of his cure was manifest in the splendor of a new beauty which clothed him like a garment.

At Mont Salvat, Parsifal found the fruition of all his hopes. Kondwiramur joined him there, and the pure love which had not diminished during their long separation was rewarded. Lohengrin, his heir, remained many years at the castle to fulfill the ministry of love, and finally succeeded his father in the royal guardianship of the Grail. Gardeis, the younger son, returned to the world inheriting the kingdom which Parsifal had left behind him.

The peace which only rises from the conquering of self came to Parsifal, as it may come to every one. It is sought often through years of painful striving and through dissonance

and inharmony. When one attains it, it is with the realization that as soon as striving ceases the fruition of trust begins. The self drops out of life, and is replaced by faith and love; the faith which believes that only the best can be manifest; the love which accepts the world because it is, and endeavors to understand the laws of existence.

Lowell has expressed the spirit of the story of Parsifal most perfectly in his beautiful *Sir Launfal*, where the idea of service and love running all through the poem is caught and incarnated. For long years Sir Launfal sought the Grail, as did Parsifal, with outward service. He threw a coin to the leper at the gate, shrinking from his misery with horror, not knowing that such alms are cursed, not only to the recipient, but to the donor as well. When years had passed by, when his plumes were draggled and his golden armor bore many a scratch and mar, when he had learned the need of sympathy and tenderness through his own disappointment and suffering, then Launfal

knew that the only value in charity is from the loving service that brother gives to brother. When he met the leper again he shared his crust with him, he scooped water in his hands and gave him to drink, he kissed his parched lips, and did not shrink from the intimate embrace of human suffering.

Then suddenly the leper disappeared, and a glorious stranger stood before him, a stranger in appearance only, however, because his presence was familiar in the heart of the knight. "Look no longer for the Grail in foreign lands," he said; "thou hast found it in thy heart, when thou hast learned that the noblest giving is to give thyself."

The lesson of love, the love of God and man interpenetrated, is the message of the Grail; and this message, translated by poet after poet, has naturally found its loftiest interpretation in the hands of a master of our own time. The world has been growing gradually into a more and more complete knowledge of comradeship which is the flower and perfection of

beautiful and loving service; and this highest culture of the human soul is expressed and unified in Wagner's great drama of *Parsifal*.

Wagner drew largely from the poem of Wolfram. He had nothing to add to the philosophy of the latter, which was already exquisite in its spirit; but he added immensely to its dramatic power and its unity of development. While he drew more fully from this source than from any other, he was familiar with all, and accomplished the final and complete welding together of the various lines of the Grail stories.

In Wolfram's poem, for instance, the Grail is never the cup. The poet prefers to ignore the purely Christian origin of the mythical Grail, although he must have been familiar with it from the poem of Chrestiens. He is so absorbed in the symbolic meaning of the Grail that he wishes to represent it as a magical shining stone, which the angels brought from the stars, and which possesses every attribute of the Grail as it is represented in the forms of the cup.

Wolfram evidently determined to render his symbolism unmistakable; and therefore he refuses every reference to the Grail as a chalice, and its inheritance through the lineage of Joseph of Arimathea and his descendants. To Wagner, however, this very inheritance heightened the value of the Grail as a symbol. It became directly connected with the service of Christ to humanity, and Wagner had none of the fear of theological association which doubtless impelled Wolfram to adopt the different origin. This, he says, was drawn from an Arabian manuscript, translated by the poet Kyot.

Wagner was led to the study of the Grail poems by a variety of circumstances. In his later years he had become deeply interested in the question of the duty of man in his relation to his fellows. His own sorrows had taught him many lessons, among others the value of sacrifice; and he had conceived the idea of a musical drama which should especially illustrate this. A conception of the significance of spiritual conflict and victory had formed in

Wagner's mind, as we know, from the time when he wrote the Nibelungen operas. Siegfried is a victor, who attains, like Parsifal, after many trials; but, in the delineation of his conflict, struggle is intensified. The Siegfried dramas are devoted to the narration of the conflict; and the victory is only indicated at the close. The significance of the victory was growing in Wagner's consciousness, however, and he began to plan a drama of which Jesus Christ should be the hero, and salvation the theme. Not satisfied with this, he devised another entitled *The Victor*, of which Sakya-muni Buddha, was to be the central figure, and in which the evolution in the spirit of the great rescuer was to be through the growth of divine pity to sublime renunciation of self.

Many writers speak of Wagner's *Parsifal* as a Schopenhauer drama, and of Wagner as a pessimist who was led into unfortunate hatred of the world through the insidious reflections of the German philosopher. But Wagner was a much wiser student of Schopenhauer than

are most men. He perceived the true inner meaning of Schopenhauer's philosophy; and felt that denial of self by no means inculcates denial of happiness; but is, on the contrary, the truest introduction to most perfect joy. His mind pondered eagerly therefore all ideals of self renunciation. He studied Buddhism because he saw in the theories of Sakyamuni an exquisite realization of the annihilation of self; and he turned to the ideal of eternal love presented in the figure of Jesus Christ with the same feeling that here also was dramatically and poetically offered him the theme of a great drama which was already written and enacted, and which needed nothing but the setting and interpretation of his own wonderful art.

It was through such ideals that Wagner formulated his convictions on the destruction of "the will to live." It is the will to live selfishly which is to be destroyed; and a conception of new and beautiful relationships grew up in Wagner's mind, not only through the suggestion of Buddha, Christ and Schopen-

hauer; but through the sharp discipline of his own life. Bad health, financial difficulty, which seems changeless, and domestic association, which causes continual discouragement, are apt to set a man to inquiring into the philosophy of life and the meaning of his own environment. Added to this were the years of exile in the little city of Zürich. Wagner had the heart-rending experience, not only of being banished from his country most unjustly, but of creating all his greatest work, with the exception of *Parsifal*, in misfortune; and with no apparent result from his genius except that it unfitted him for earning a living. In middle life he seemed to himself a failure in all that constituted outward success; though he recognized how fully his spirit had been freed to do its allotted work. His only friend, Franz Liszt, was his confidant and support during his years of poverty and distress, and Liszt never doubted the ultimate success of Wagner's operas. It was not strange, however, that when recog-

nition was so long delayed Wagner's faith should fail.

The composer was born in 1813, and King Ludwig only rescued him from misanthropy and starvation in 1864. At that time he had written all of his great musical dramas, except *Parsifal*; and but one of these had been successfully performed. Liszt had produced Lohengrin at the little theatre of Weimar, and Wagner experienced the pleasure of witnessing one performance. He knew that the Nibelungen operas could only be introduced to the public in a building especially constructed for their production. He wrote to Liszt: "Only a monarch could undertake such an enterprise; and can I expect so absurd a possibility?" Liszt replied: "If a king is necessary, God can send you a king!" But Wagner's faith had failed before the suggestion of such a miracle.

"How can you talk of a future," he said one day to Frau Wille, his constant friend in the little city of Zürich, "when my manuscripts are locked up in my desk? Who is to bring

out the art work which only I, with propitious conditions, can produce, so that all the world can see how it is, how the master saw and wanted his work?"

His wife left him and went to her own relatives in 1864, weary of the life of poverty and nervous strain which she led with him. Wagner sought in vain to induce her to return; and the shock of her desertion seemed to mark the culmination of the disasters which had accompanied him from birth. Pursued by his creditors, to whom he owed large sums, Wagner left Zürich, and slipped secretly from one German city to another. At last, in its very darkest hour, his fate was altered as suddenly as in the swift changes of the fairy world, where by the utterance of a magic word, the frog becomes a prince, or the hovel is transformed into a palace.

Convinced of the hopeless failure of his existence, Wagner had procured a pistol, and was about to end his life when, in 1864, the emissary of King Ludwig found him. Liszt's

prophecy had proved true, God had provided a King; and from that moment the combination of fortunate elements in Wagner's career seems almost an intentional exaggeration. The King's favor lifted him to a position of power and opulence such as he had not dreamed of. Nineteen years of fortune and opportunity stretched before him, in which his genius could attain that ripened perfection which is evident in the musical drama of *Parsifal*. As if to make certain that no painful circumstance should remain to mar the new happiness of the musician's life, Wagner's wife, Minna, died in 1866, and relieved him of the saddening consciousness of her suffering and disappointment in their union. His later marriage to Cosima Liszt von Bulow, in 1870, brought him an intimate and sympathetic domestic joy such as he had never dared hope for. It was, perhaps, the largest item of satisfaction in the singular good fortune of his last days.

In such a life, the absence of success and recognition through so many years must pro-

duce pessimism and despair, or a loving philosophy; and Wagner has himself told us how, at a very significant moment of his career, the wonderful volumes of Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Idea*, were put into his hands. Through the philosophy of this great thinker, he wakened to the consciousness that there is a universal divine will, which penetrates and creates all things, which speaks in each one of us, and of which we may become the exponents if we will but lift ourselves to its teachings. This mystical side of Schopenhauer's philosophy touched especially the enlightened mind of Richard Wagner, rousing him to optimism. He recognized the beauty of the doctrine of self-renunciation expressed so clearly by the German philosopher, and from that moment we see it coloring every conception of the musician.

He showed us in his sunny-haired Siegfried, the hero of the *Nibelungen Ring*, the man who could never be touched by self-interest, never influenced by love of money, and who could

only be weaned from his high ideal of love for Brunhilde by perfidy and deception. He learned through the temptations of sense the life of the soul; and died remembering Brunhilde and all the joy he had lost.

In *Tristan and Isolde* the problem of love and human destiny again perplexed Wagner. The hero must rise above his sensuous environment or he can not solve the riddle of his life. The fatal draught which Tristan swallowed, like that which was presented to Siegfried, signifies that excitement of the senses which leads mankind away from the ideal and into the material. Wagner knew the purifying power of great love, however; and, though he pictured the sin of indulgence into which Tristan and Isolde fell, he painted also their penance, and the purification which in such cases can only result through suffering. In the great final act of the drama where Tristan lies dying and Isolde can only come to him through the sacrifice of all her worldly station and glory, she comes nevertheless; and the

closing scene reveals to us that perfection of renunciation which is only possible when the temptation of self has been conquered.

Such dramas are significant in the development of Wagner's idealism. They prepared the way for *Parsifal*; brought the spiritual insight which found expression in this greatest of Wagner's works; and enabled him to experience that divine mood of sublime faith, of happiness in the consummation of ideals, which is the predominant note in *Parsifal*. Wagner did not know, probably, that this would be his last work; and perhaps intended to construct later the victor theme, which would be especially related to Christ or Buddha. In reality, however, he concentrated all his spiritual ideals for the perfection of humanity in *Parsifal*. The changes which were necessary for the exigencies of the drama Wagner did not hesitate to make; and the hero of Wolfram von Eschenbach has here assumed even more tragical and grandiose proportions than those

with which he is endowed in the mediæval poem.

Wagner lent one supreme charm to his creation, moreover, which none of the preceding Grail poets possessed. Those were dependent upon words alone for the transmission of their beautiful symbolism; but Wagner has added to the melody of the poets' verse the magic of his inimitable and subtle harmonies. The music of Wagner is the pure ecstasy which inspired him. In the drama of *Parsifal*, he has not only revealed to us the ideal embodied in his profound and beautiful philosophy, but in the music which accompanies and interprets it he has given to the world the feeling out of which this ideal attained conception and growth.

The opera of *Parsifal* is divided into three acts only, and within this compass the composer has told the wonderful story of the evolution of a soul, its awakening, its temptation and achievement, the shadow of its promise, the radiance of its perfection. Wag-

ner was impressed by the significance of the "growth of pity" in Parsifal's heart, an expanding comprehension of which would mean so much in spiritual development. The drama unfolds from this central thought and culminates in the exquisite and inimitably spiritual expression of the last act.

The first act opens with the Grail castle and the environment of Mont Salvat. The two characters of Gurnemanz and Trevrezent are combined in one, who has become the chief guardian of the Grail, and is named Gurnemanz. The knight and his esquires have been engaged in their devotions of the morning, and have just risen to begin the cares of the day, when they are disturbed by the appearance of Kundry upon the scene. She comes with the healing herb which she has ridden far to seek, and which she hopes will alleviate the suffering of King Amfortas. Gurnemanz goes on to speak of the King, his long illness and the Grail, and he has just expressed the hope that "the fool, who alone can heal him,

will not much longer delay his arrival, when Parsifal emerges from the surrounding forest. He is an ignorant and undeveloped boy, and has shot and killed one of the swans which are sacred birds at Mont Salvat. "I shoot all that flies," he replies in answer to the question of Gurnemanz; but the response of the knight which follows brings him enlightenment:

"Unheard of deed!

And thou couldst murder? here, in holy wood,
With still peace o'er thy pathway brooding?
The wild beasts here, didst thou not find them tame
Greeting thee friendly and kind?
The birds—what sang they from the branches green?
The swan—did he aught ill?
His sweet wife to seek out, flew he aloft
With her to circle o'er the sea
Which he so consecrates for healing bath.
That moves thee not? That stirs thee but
With wild and childish wish to kill?
We loved him once, what is he now to thee?
Look!—where thy blow hath struck him!
How thick is the blood—the pinions are strengthless,
The snowy feathers, their brilliance gone!
His darkened eye—seest thou his broken glance?
Art thou not sorry for thine act?
Say, boy, knowst thou thy heavy sin?
How couldst thou do the deed?"

Parsifal recognized his guilt. Contrition entered his heart, and he broke his bow. He will never shed innocent blood again. There is another lesson for him, however, following this event. Gurnemanz thinks he may be "the fool," who, the oracle foretold, would come some day and heal the King. So [he admitted the boy to the hall, where the wonderful scene of the Grail ceremony passed before his eyes. But the moment for Parsifal's new birth had not yet arrived. The great hall, with its brilliant company, did not astonish him; the tolling of the bells, the incense, the procession of beautiful maidens, all left him indifferent and unimpressed. When the marvelous cup was brought in, though it was not uncovered, the suffering of King Amfortas was so poignant that those present could scarcely bear the spectacle of it; and the rich fragrance from the sacred vessel rejoiced the heart of every one except the repentant monarch. Gurnemanz was disgusted at the indifference and stolidity which Parsifal maintained throughout the

strange scene; and dismissed him angrily with an admonition to go and learn wisdom from the awakening of pity!

Parsifal's nature is, however, to be still more deeply stirred. When he leaves the castle and returns once more to the forest, Kundry accompanies him. She engages him in conversation, tells him of many things of his past, and informs him of the death of his mother. The boy's heart is almost broken at this intelligence, and Kundry calls up all her art to comfort him, pitying his innocence and his grief. In Wagner's drama, Kundry is a very different character from *Kondrie la Sorciere* of Wolfram's poem. In the latter she is the messenger of the Grail castle, whose mission seems to be that of going back and forth between Mont Salvat and the world. In Wagner's drama, she is an unfortunate woman who has fallen under the spell of Klingschor, the magician, and becomes one of the elements of fascination in his marvelous palace of enchantment.

At night Kundry is the slave of the magi-

cian, and his most powerful enchantress. It was to her beauty that Amfortas yielded when he crossed the threshold of Klingschor's realm; and many a knight lost his soul under the terrible spell of her irresistible fascination. Kundry, however, is not a willing slave of Klingschor. She obeys him by compulsion, and in the daytime she devotes herself enthusiastically to the service of the knights of the Grail. In this way she expiates in part the sin of which she is guilty while under the spell of the magician.

Kundry is a symbol of the love which is man's temptation when it appeals to him in the realm of the sensuous, but finds its highest realization and evolution when no longer under the spur of the passions. She represents, in some degree, a double symbolism, since she pictures also the struggle of mankind for spiritual freedom. This element of contest and conflict, appearing so largely in the earlier dramas, is almost eliminated from *Parsifal*; but it is figured in the endeavor of Kundry,

to free herself from the spell of the enchanter, oftentimes repeated, yet in vain.

The entire setting of the first act of *Parsifal* is of unequaled beauty. The picture of the innocence of forest life, so poetically presented, reminds one of the charm of the forest scenes in *Siegfried*, and the recurring *motifs* of pity, passion, the magic of Klingschor, the suffering of Amfortas, break dramatically, but do not destroy, the beautiful impression of youthful purity which is ignorant but sinless. There is nothing more exquisite than the music of the Grail service, except that of the final act in which the triumph and redemption of Parsifal were attained. The overture, with its beautiful union of all the leading *motifs* of the drama, has prepared the way for this pure picture of simple, natural life with which the scene of the opening breaks upon us. The heavenly chorus of the Grail ceremony seems to gather and accentuate the entire spirit of the work in the strain, "Take my body, take my blood, in remembrance of our love." The

melody is played first by the violins and the wood wind instruments, and no one who has heard this wonderful music can have failed to feel the singular power of these ethereally vibrating tones as they resound first; and then are repeated in somewhat heavier accompaniment by the more sonorous instruments. They express the wholly uplifting and optimistic tendency of the music which bids us look ever and ever upward!

“There is but one way to look, and that is up! Nothing on the waters or under the earth, nothing in the earth, nothing about the earth, can offer help or assistance; but the light cometh ever down from above; and there can no hostile hand interpose.” This is the message of the music.

The second act is very different in character. It includes the description of Klingschor's palace and Parsifal's temptation. Gurnemanz, in the first act, had explained the double character of Kundry; but this apparently did not prepare the unsophisticated hero for the scene

which burst upon him when he crossed the threshold of Klingschor's realm. The ether-eally sensuous dance music of the second act accompanies a series of successively dissolving vistas, including every natural beauty and artificial enhancement which could appeal to the senses. Wagner, at the first presentation of the drama at Bayreuth, spared nothing in the way of spectacular effect, and the gorgeous tropical plants which filled the garden of this strange fairyland, though they were like none that ever grew in actual tropics, were singularly decorative in their strange, weird beauty.

There are three great climaxes in the second act. The exquisite charm of the opening scenes prepares the way for the appearance of Kundry, who, in her aspect of the sorceress, is more beautiful than all else. Kundry has done her best to avoid the ruin of Parsifal. She loves the gentle, innocent boy, and would not be an instrument of his destruction; but her master issues his command, and she is obliged to execute his will. As Parsifal

advances through the charming confusion of sweet scents and lovely forms so strange to him, he hears his name called in the distance. *Par-si-fal! Par-si-fal!* It is his mother's voice! What does it mean? He pauses to listen; and presently the enchantress emerges from the thickets that have concealed her. She is more fascinating than any being the boy has ever seen; and drawing him toward her lovingly she begins to tell him of his past life, showing singular familiarity with every incident connected with it. She tells him of his lordly father, Gahmuret, and of his gentle mother. She describes to him once more the sudden death of the queen, dwelling upon her anguish at parting from her son; and of the shock which his apparent indifference caused her. She concludes her recital with the solemn words, "And Herzeleide died!"

Parsifal can bear no more; and his shriek of anguish breaks in upon her words, as he cries: "Blessed mother! could I forget thee!" Kundry soothes him, and recalls to him the

thought of his mother's love, of the love which she bore his father, and she paints in thrilling words the beauty of such love as Gahmuret cherished for Herzeleide. "Thou shouldst know it," she says, suddenly drawing him close to her; "I will show thee how Gahmuret loved Herzeleide! I will give thee the kiss of first love!"

The dénouement might have resulted very differently had the victim of Kundry's experiment been other than a prophet and a saint. As the youth felt the fragrant breath of the enchantress touch his cheek and realized the gentle pressure of her lips upon his own, something awakened in him which he had never known before. It was the fever of desire, of passion, the anguish intolerable to the pure in heart.

Parsifal sprang to his feet, conscious of one fierce longing—to free Amfortas! "This is what Amfortas suffers!" flashed through his consciousness. "This is the fire which devours him. And Parsifal looked on coldly! Parsifal

could not save him! Parsifal went away unheeding, without even a thought for the suffering king!"

The reappearance of the Grail themes and the beautiful *motif* of pity in the music at this moment are of the utmost importance in the cumulative effect of all. The *motif* of pity is the one which recurs most frequently in the *Parsifal* harmonies. It is probably the fragment which Wagner noted down upon Good Friday in Zürich, when the first inspiration of *Parsifal* came to him; and he seemed to hear "the sigh of most profound pity which once resounded from the cross at Golgotha." The strain of pity reappears when Parsifal breaks his bow, when he sees Amfortas suffering, when the knowledge of what it means suddenly drops into his consciousness like a fiery brand, when he pours the consecrating water upon Kundry's brow, in fact, at every moment of his life when the divinity of compassion is unveiled to him.

Kundry's kiss, instead of ensnaring him

within the meshes of pleasure, brings him the enlightenment of a loving pity. He sees all that he must do for Amfortas; and at the same moment the misery that his love would heap anew upon Kundry, provided he allowed it scope. He recommends her to leave him. "Be apart from me forever!" he cries, and after another attempt to win him, Kundry threatens him with the curse, that terrible curse which will make him a weary wanderer for many years. But Parsifal does not hear her threatening words. The Good Friday melody has burst in upon Kundry's cursing song, mingled with the gentle and loving accents of the Savior's reproach. A marvelous vision unrolls before his eyes: "I see Him—Him!" he exclaims. He perceives the Savior standing before him. "His glance struck me!" cries Parsifal, and he cannot hear the curse which Kundry hurls upon him. What does it matter if he is a wanderer? Could he suffer so much as did this gracious Presence standing so benignantly before him?

Ah, no! And let all suffering descend upon him! It would not be sufficient to expiate his sin of selfishness!

There is nothing more dramatic and wildly beautiful in the opera than the mingling of many melodies in this wonderful scene where Heaven seems pitted against hell, and Parsifal is lifted to that pitch of ecstasy where fear not only gives place to love, but, from the high impulse roused to action, suffering and its anticipation becomes a joy. In its conclusion Kundry, finding Parsifal oblivious to the curse she has uttered, calls Klingschor, and the magician appears in the distance, and hurls his spear at Parsifal, the same spear with which he had formerly wounded Amfortas. Parsifal stands unterrified; and as the spear rushes toward him he seizes it quickly and makes the sign of the cross. Instantly the castle sinks into ruins, the garden disappears, the beautiful maidens seem only withered flowers. Kundry shrieks and falls in a swoon; and Parsifal

turns before his departure to exclaim: "Thou knowest where we shall meet again!"

The curse of Kundry was tragical in its effect, and subjected Parsifal to the long wandering which is so fully described in Wolfram's poem; but can only be symbolically indicated in a dramatic opera. It is suggested by the introductory music of the great third act, the opening of which shows us Gurnemanz grown old during the long absence of Parsifal. The knight rides forward in full armor, and finds his ancient instructor alone save for the presence of Kundry, whose mournful singing is heard behind the hermit's hut. Gurnemanz does not recognize the knight at first; and begs him to respect Good Friday by laying aside his armor as a Christian knight should. Presently he sees the spear which Parsifal has carried ever since his memorable interview with Kundry, and which Gurnemanz could never forget, because it is the same with which Amfortas was wounded, and with which alone, the oracle declared, he could be healed.

Gurnemanz greets Parsifal joyfully, therefore, believing he brings salvation and restoration for the suffering King. He tells Parsifal how sad the great castle has become. Since his previous visit Amfortas has not allowed the Grail to be uncovered. It increased his torments and he hoped that if not strengthened by the holy sustenance of the cup, death might come to him. Upon this very day he had promised to uncover it once more; and Parsifal has arrived just in time. Parsifal is so touched by this recital that he almost faints away. He feels in it the story, told once more, of his own sin, of his indifferent selfishness, the memory of which has embittered his consciousness for so many years. Kundry, meanwhile, like himself, has passed the intervening years in endeavoring to wipe out the mistakes of her past; and has learned the blessed virtue of tender pity. She runs for a basin of water. She bathes his head, and then follows the beautiful foot-washing scene. She bathes his feet, pours oil upon them, and dries them with her dark

tresses, while the recurrence of the *motif* of pity once more impresses us with the regeneration which has taken place in Kundry's heart. Gurnemanz comforts Parsifal by recalling to him the tender love of God who pardons all; and in whom the earth is constantly new born:

“And now perceives each blade and meadow flower
That mortal foot to-day it need not dread;
For as the Lord in pity man did spare
And in his mercy for him bled,
All men will keep with pious care
To-day a tender tread.
Then thanks the whole creation
Makes,
With all that flowers and fast goes
Hence,
That trespass-pardoned nature
Wakes
Now to her day of innocence.”

Kundry raises her eyes full of tears to Parsifal, as if to entreat his pardon for her share in his sin; and as the scene of the curse returns to him, he says gently:

“I saw my scornful mockers wither;
Now look they for forgiveness hither!
Like a sweet dew, a tear from thee too floweth,
Thou weapest, see, the landscape gloweth!”

He stoops and kisses her gently on the brow, while the harmonious pealing of the bells in the distance announces that the hour for the Grail procession has arrived. Kundry and Gurnemanz clothe Parsifal in the armor and mantle of a Grail warrior. The landscape changes gradually, the hall of the Grail castle becomes visible, and once more is seen the procession of maidens, the knights bearing Titurel's coffin, and the couch of Amfortas. The old King has died at last, as the Grail can not be uncovered, and Amfortas suffers double anguish, because he feels that he is the cause of his father's death. He has decided to tear open his wounds and die at the uncovering of the Grail, hoping at least that with this action death will put an end to his suffering and his remorse. The world is dark to Amfortas, despair fills his soul. In his excitement, he has not observed Parsifal; he utters a cry of despair; the hero steps forward with the sacred spear in his hands. He stretches forth the weapon, exclaiming:

"One weapon only serves,
The one that struck
Can staunch thy wounded side.
Be whole, unsullied, and absolved!
For I now govern in thy place.
Oh, blessed be thy sorrows;
For pity's potent might
And knowledge—purest power—
They taught a timid fool.
The Holy Spear,
Once more behold in this!
Oh, mighty miracle of bliss!
This that through me thy wound
Restoreth.
With holy blood behold it poureth
Which yearns to join the fountain
Glowing,
Whose pure tide in the Grail is
Flowing.
Hid be no more that shape divine!
Disclose the Grail, open the shrine!"

It would be impossible to suggest in mere words the beauty of the closing scenes of Wagner's wonderful drama. As Parsifal stands before the shrine, he takes the Grail in his hand, and kneels, silently praying. The knights kneel also, and a white dove descends from above and hovers over Parsifal's head.

The Grail is uncovered, and the glory from it fills the entire hall. Parsifal waves it gently in his hand, back and forth, and Kundry, with her eyes fixed upon Parsifal, sinks slowly to the ground. The hour of her penance is complete, and her happiness is attained. Parsifal had not forgotten her in the absorption of his greater mission. Before he healed the King he dropped the consecrating water upon Kundry's brow; and the purification of her soul became complete. The love for Parsifal which had blossomed in her heart for many years was her first redemption. It had risen into a stainless aspiration for the noblest effort. Kundry's life under the spell of the enchanter had been for years a slavery of the body in which she had ardently longed for death. Now, at last, when she had expiated her wrongdoing by beautiful service, when her soul had freed itself, her prayer was granted. "*Das Böse bannt, wer's mit Gutem vergilt*" ("He banishes evil, who replaces it with good"), says Wagner; and Kundry's ministry had so

etherealized her being that under the inspiration of the marvelous healing music the spirit could no longer be restrained. The body died that the soul might take its flight, and Kundry was free.

During the enactment of this beautiful scene, the music continues, and the boys' voices chant in the background the Heavenly concluding chorus:

"Wondrous work of mercy,
Salvation to the Savior!"

When Wagner first wrote the drama, the final chorus contained the words:

"Great is the magic of desire,
Greater the power of renunciation!"

These words include, philosophically, the germinal thought of the great drama, that of the elimination of passionate desire, through the gracious power of loving renunciation. The second idea was far greater, however, and seems to complete, in its expression, the boundless and divine scope of the ideal conceived. In Parsifal we see the hero in whom the wis-

dom of heavenly pity has grown so large and inclusive that renunciation has become a joy. Yet, if Parsifal had been false to his trust when he attained this wisdom, he himself would have lost salvation. Thus the glory of the miracle of love is complete; for salvation returns to the Savior. In saving others he saves himself as well; and all are united equally in the golden circle of eternal love.

The closing music is performed almost entirely by the violins and wood wind instruments, accompanying the voices, and the ethereal quality of tone is so exquisite that one can only imagine its resemblance to choirs of angels, chanting in harmony. The healing music, during which Parsifal restores the suffering king, is so gentle, so full of pitying and reviving love, that it seems the very incarnation of a divine elixir, the exquisite vibration of uplifting inspiration.

From beginning to end of the drama, though struggle and temptation are suggested necessarily, there is never a note which brings to

the consciousness of the observer the vulgarity and degeneration of what is called sin; for this would jar necessarily upon the spiritual mood inspired. In the flower garden of Klingschor's palace, while the maidens are throwing their wreaths over Parsifal, and calling to him, "Come with us, pretty boy!" he looks at them with the wondering eyes of innocence, and exclaims: "They smell so sweet! are they really flowers?" There is not a tone or look which could recall the world of really sensuous allurements; and yet the dramatic effect is perfect, the necessary suggestion of contrast is provided, while the deeply religious and lofty current of feeling is never broken. There is a rising crescendo of spiritual love from the first note to the last, and between the two there is nothing that could draw one very far from heaven.

It is significant that in the masterpiece of Wagner, as in that of Beethoven, one finds the purest expression of altruistic thought. In the ninth symphony, as we know, Beethoven poured forth all his dreams and longings for

a greater fraternity, a more noble consciousness of the pervading fatherhood. The nature which had been singularly cut off from the very joy of tender association, so vividly pictured in the symphony, found there a mature expression of its passionate yearning. Beethoven could not end his earthly career without leaving to mankind this exquisite musical realization of his cherished dream.

With Wagner the form is different, but the theme a kindred one. Beethoven knew the ideal of union, of kinship, of brotherhood. Wagner went a step farther. He would sing of brotherhood in salvation. "We all sin together!" he cried; "how can we all be saved together?" Having found the way, as he believed, he left us his message, the last eloquent message of the Grail poets. Is there anything more beautiful than this kinship in salvation? It makes of the sorrowful earth a joyous heaven; turns lamentation into praise; and allows the tender grass blade to lift its head without the slightest fear of being crushed.

It renders possible the union of brother with sister; and the happiness of all in God. Kundry's song quivers in the vibration of the stars; and the radiance of the Grail penetrates the night.

The power of fervent love apostrophized in Parsifal, the divinity of pity, is the center of all religion, the secret of every religious experience. Love melts away selfishness, teaches us the joy of service, initiates us into the beautiful mystery of loving all men alike; eliminates the crime of caste and class. Through the ministry of love, the denial of that which belongs to the realm of the senses becomes joyous rather than ascetic and gloomy. Love recognizes the highest self and we are united to that with a fervor in the glow of which the lower is transformed and fused. It is not lost, but transmuted. The mystery of transfiguration is realized in every individual the moment the truth is pierced by love. The radiance of the soul illumines the entire being; and in its light

all belongs to the highest; nothing that was ignoble can remain.

This is the miracle that destroys the "will to live," elucidated by Schopenhauer. As soon as the consciousness of immortal existence arises, desire for the baser mortal life disappears; but we need not crave death therefore. It is better to transfuse the body than to desert it, to change it from a heavy impediment into a garment of light. By living in the pure breath of the spirit, the environment of illusion disappears, and we exist in that joyous consciousness of the Presence which the Grail brought to Galahad. All limitations are lost to us from that moment. We divinize the earth life by a knowledge of its lofty symbolism, and every bodily act becomes a consecration. We breathe and live our truth; we do not need to preach it. Our life becomes eternal, and we know our immortality. The body grows so slight and ethereal a shield that the dropping of it means little to us, and death no longer contains a mystery. Like Dante,

we can converse with the seraphim; like Emerson, we can feel that joyous consciousness of the presence of the Over Soul, which we must call ecstasy while it is momentary; but when it becomes habitual, as it easily may, deserves a more stable name, in which there is no suggestion of the hysterical nor the evanescent. The garment of love is so harmoniously adjusted to every frame that after we have once donned it we could wear no other; and, like the mantle of Repanse de Schoie, when it fell over the shoulders of Parsifal, it not only fills us with peace, but inclines every heart toward us. From that moment the world is not the same. The soul of the poet alone is within us; and we must be always in accord with divinity. We know sin only to pity it; we recognize sorrow to remove it. Suspicion is impossible to us; our knowledge includes all. We carry a light within, so that wherever we go we cast no shadow; and, walking in the light, we can have no fear. We grow in sunlight as do

the lilies, having no thought for our raiment. Our proper avocation is revealed to us, so that we work according to God's law, and are rewarded from his abundance. We eat at the table spread through the power of the Grail; and in that generous provision there can be no lack of anything. The song of our life rises into richer fullness through the songs of other lives with which we come in contact; it is mingled with the chorus of angels, for the Universe has opened before our eyes; space is no longer a veil to us, and we live in heaven as well as upon earth. The ideal has possessed us and absorbed the real. The chanting of the angels mingles with the chorus of human lives, and each gains in harmony through the at-one-ment of strains which unite the stars with one another and the planets with our earth.

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